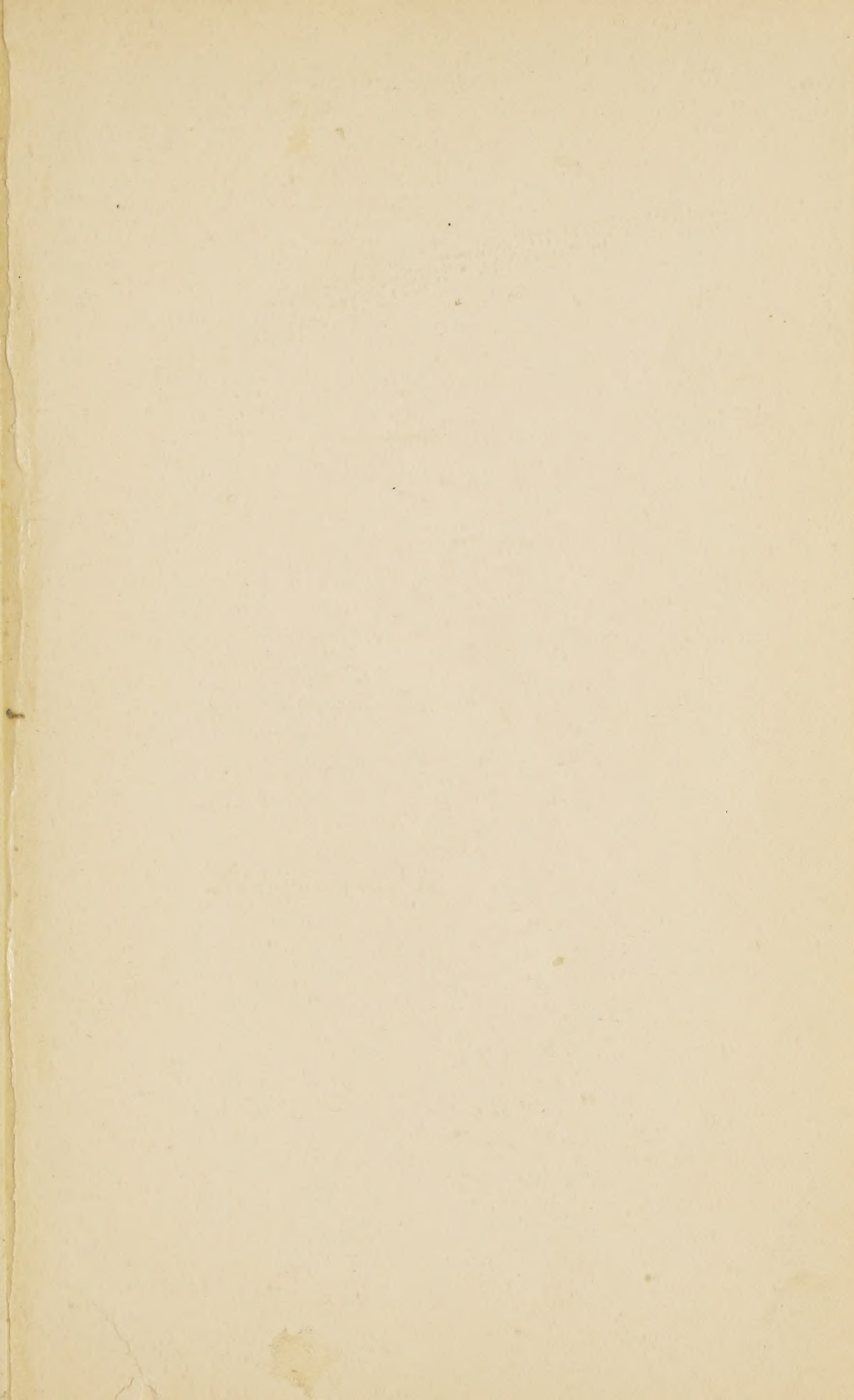
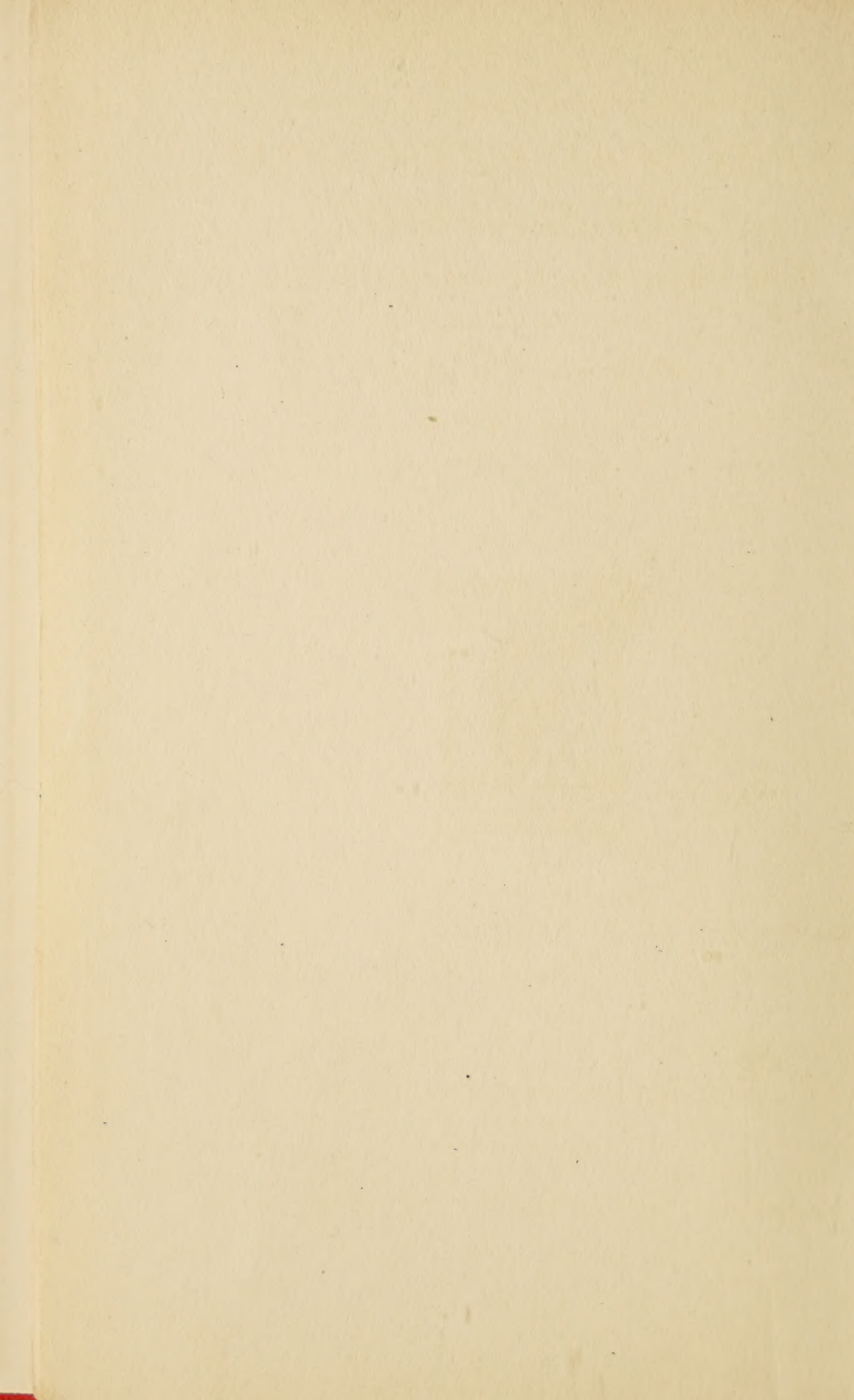


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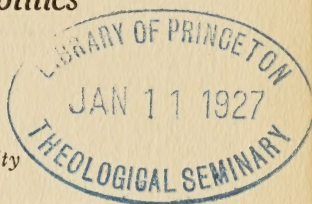


EPISCOPAL METHODISM AND SLAVERY

With Sidelights on Ecclesiastical Politics

CHARLES BAUMER SWANEY

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P R E F A C E

The union of the various branches of Methodism has been the goal towards which many earnest leaders have been working during the past half century. Too often, however, they have assumed that the faults of the past were to be laid at the door of some other group than that which they represent. No clear understanding of the problem of union can be obtained without a thorough knowledge of the relation of Methodism to slavery prior to 1865. This correct knowledge is not to be sought in the prejudices of either section.

In this volume, the author has sought to present the material on 'Episcopal Methodism and Slavery' from the organization of the Methodist societies in 1766 to the close of the Civil War. The bibliography will indicate that many books have been written on various phases of this subject; but none of them gives a complete picture of the Church and slavery. Indebtedness to these former writers has been scrupulously acknowledged in the footnotes.

In the consideration of a subject so filled with controversy it is difficult to avoid the charge of prejudice. Suffice it to say that if the author had any prejudices in the inception of this work they were those common to northern Methodists. However, the work was undertaken, not to sustain a theory but to discover the truth.

It is probable that many theories as to the past attitude of Methodism towards slavery must be abandoned because they are based upon prejudice and self-interest rather than upon fact. When Methodist leaders are ready to face the facts and admit the wrongs and errors of past decades, real Methodist union is possible. Because such an understanding has its basis in truth it will be eminently desirable.

C. B. S.

*Upper Iowa University,
March 31, 1926.*

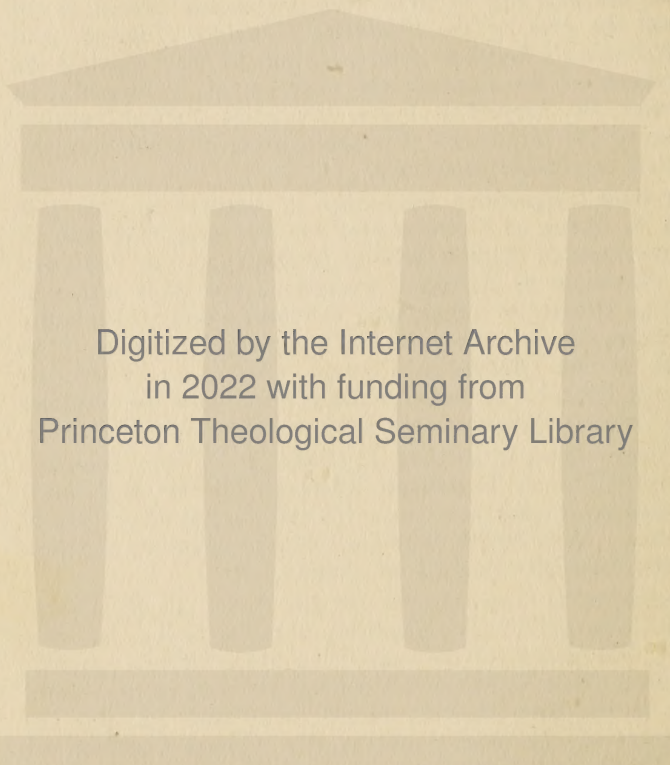
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For their suggestions, the author is indebted to Professor James A. James of Northwestern; to Professor William D. Schermerhorn of Garrett Biblical Institute; and to Professor J. N. Norwood of Alfred University. The topic was suggested by Professor James, who has been a constant inspiration during the period required to complete the study. "The Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844" by Professor Norwood has proved very valuable, especially his chapters on the General Conference of 1844 and the succeeding years.

At Upper Iowa University, President J. P. Van Horn and Professors Earl A. Roadman, Elizabeth Nichols and Annie L. Corbitt have read the manuscript and offered many helpful criticisms. Miss Nellie Jones, a major student in History, has been especially helpful on chapter VI.

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*Episcopal Methodism and
Slavery*

PART I.

THE FORMING OF PRECEDENTS

EPISCOPAL METHODISM AND SLAVERY

CHAPTER I

ANTI-SLAVERY PRECEDENTS

American Methodists looked to John Wesley for guidance on the issue of slavery. It was natural that they should do so, as in other disputed questions, nor did they look in vain. The founder of the Methodist societies had spoken in no uncertain terms against slavery. It is true that in the original rules adopted by Mr. Wesley in 1743 slavery was not condemned because the societies over which he then exercised authority were not compelled to deal with the question of human bondage. But fifteen years before Clarkson, Wilberforce and Granville Sharp undertook to destroy slavery within the British possessions, Wesley had formed a "Society for the Suppression of the Slave Trade."¹ In 1772 he denounced the slave trade as "the sum of all villainies."²

The first Methodist society in America was organized in 1766.³ Because of the weakness of the new Church and the fact that no general meetings were held until 1773,⁴ any antagonism shown towards slavery was manifested by individual ministers and members of the various societies. It was Freeborn Garrettson, one of the earliest Methodist ministers in this country, who, in 1773, not only freed his own slaves but boldly condemned slavery in North Carolina.⁵ Two years later, he spoke publicly in Virginia against human bondage, the result being that several of his audience freed their slaves. In fact, so strongly was Garrettson opposed to slavery that this, joined with the suspicion in which Methodists of Revolutionary times were held, created considerable opposition to the work of the denomination.⁶ Philip Gatch of Powhatan County, Virginia, emancipated all his slaves, since he was convinced "that all men are by nature equally free."⁷

The course taken by these earliest Methodist leaders was fully approved by Thomas Coke and Francis Asbury. In North Carolina the former condemned slaveholding, but was unable to convince one man of his error — Coke says because

the impenitent citizen owned twenty-four slaves.⁸ Occasionally, Coke found that some slaveholders would listen respectfully, but generally they remained obdurate — one even after having read “Wesley’s Thoughts on Slavery” “*three times over*”;⁹ some Church members “*raged like a lion*”;¹⁰ while others unceremoniously shut their doors against the preachers, on one occasion because the planter in question possessed eighty slaves.¹¹ After preaching the funeral sermon of an influential slaveholder, Coke wrote in his *Journal*: “On Wednesday 6, I preached the late Colonel Bedford’s funeral sermon. But I said nothing good of him, for he was a violent friend of slavery, and his interest being great among the Methodists in these parts, he would have been a dreadful thorn in our sides, if the Lord had not in mercy taken him away.”⁸ Coke’s propaganda during April and May, 1785, caused mobs to assemble, and rewards to be offered to those who flogged him.¹² Finally, a bill, in which he was charged with sedition, was presented against him before the Grand Jury. When Coke eluded his tormenters, nineteen men offered to pursue him and bring him back.¹³

Of all the leaders of early American Methodism, Francis Asbury was easily the greatest. Religious fervor, tremendous enthusiasm, untiring zeal — together with a genius for organization and leadership — made Asbury the worthy leader of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America, even as the same qualities had placed John Wesley at the head of the Methodist movement in England. That Asbury hated slavery is fully attested by his journal. In the year of Independence he wrote: “How will the sons of oppression answer for their conduct, when the great Proprietor of all shall call them to account!”¹⁴ When he observed the exertions of the Friends in behalf of the slaves, he declared that the Methodists must follow their example.¹⁵ In reply to those who justified slavery from the biblical record, Asbury asserted that polygamy and servitude were allowed by the ceremonial law of the Old Testament that greater evils might be avoided. But he maintained that the spirit of compromise was not present at the Creation but was the result of the “Fall”.¹⁶ Some of Asbury’s sermons were condemnatory of the system of slavery; in a few instances his auditors gave heed to his exhortations. By conviction, then, Asbury was an abolitionist, one of the last entries in his journal being an

expression of sympathy for the slaves and of censure for their masters.¹⁷

With the leaders of the early Methodist societies so strongly opposed to slavery it was inevitable that the conferences of the Church should deal with the subject. Although annual meetings of all Methodist ministers were held, beginning with 1773,¹⁸ it was not until 1780 that official action was taken against slavery.¹⁹ The conference required all travelling preachers²⁰ who held slaves to free them; they acknowledged that slavery was "contrary to the dictates of conscience and pure religion," and opposed to the principles of the Golden Rule. They censured their slaveholding friends and advised the manumission of the slaves.²¹ Three years later, the ministers passed still more stringent rules. In all states which permitted emancipation of slaves, the assistant pastors were instructed to deal "faithfully and plainly" with slaveholding local preachers²² for another year and report to the next conference. They also adopted as a resolution the covert threat that "It may then be necessary to suspend them."²³ The rules for 1784 were still more drastic. Those who had been warned and yet persisted in holding slaves, or bought them for no other purpose than to hold them in bondage, were to be expelled; travelling preachers who refused to manumit their slaves when it was possible were to be employed no longer.²⁴

The organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church at the "Christmas Conference", held in Baltimore in 1784, was a notable event. It marked the separation of American Methodist societies from Wesley's jurisdiction; Asbury was ordained deacon and elder, and elected to the General Superintendency — all in the same day;²⁵ and slavery received marked attention. The rule adopted forbade "The buying or selling the bodies and souls of men, women and children, with an intention to enslave them."²⁶ While they hesitated to make new rules for religious societies already in existence, yet they believed that only the sternest possible action would be adequate.²⁷ In regard to slavery they said: "We view it as contrary to the golden law of God, on which hang all the law and the prophets, and the unalienable rights of mankind, as well as every principle of the Revolution, to hold in deepest debasement, in a more abject slavery than is perhaps to

be found in any part of the world except America, so many souls that are all capable of the image of God."²⁷

Following the Christmas Conference anti-slavery Methodists urged the legislatures of some of the southern states to adopt the policy of gradual emancipation. The Virginia conference had declared: "We do hold in the deepest abhorrence the practice of slavery, and shall not cease to seek its destruction by all wise and prudent means."²⁸ Consistently with this declaration the ministers circulated a petition asking the gradual emancipation of all slaves within the state of Virginia.²⁹ A Mr. Fry, one of the Methodists, was elected to the Virginia legislature. Of him, Coke wrote that he was "a precious man, and, I trust, will be eloquent in the House of Delegates for the emancipation of the Slaves. He is to present our petition."³⁰ In North Carolina, also, the Methodists were active in drawing up a petition asking the General Assembly of the state to permit masters to free their slaves. For a time it seemed that they would be successful for Coke lent his aid and Asbury won the governor's support for the measure.³¹

The testimony of the Church relative to the evil of slavery continued to be very similar to that of the Christmas Conference of 1784, although changes were made in the rule. Thus, in 1796 the rule adopted forbade "the buying or selling of men, women *or* children."³² It was at this time that the bishops were requested by the General Conference to draw up rules on slavery with annotations on the same. The bishops attempted to show that slaveholding was wrong because it was contrary to biblical teachings. In reply to the question as to what should be done "for the extirpation of the crying evil of African slavery," they answered that all slaveholders should be excluded from official positions and gave annual conferences power to act in all such cases. Before slaveholders were admitted to membership in the Church, they were to be urged to free their slaves. If a member sold a slave he was to be expelled immediately; if he purchased a servant, the ensuing quarterly conference³³ was to determine the duration of the slave's servitude. If the master refused to obey the ruling of this body, he was to be expelled. The children of a female slave, obtained by purchase, were to be freed, the females at twenty-one and the males at twenty-five years of age. In conclusion, the

ministers and members were "requested to consider the subject with deep attention, till the ensuing General Conference," so that they might the better "take further steps towards the eradicating of this enormous evil from that part of the Church of God to which they are united."³⁴

Following this strong declaration, Asbury required all ministers to be anti-slavery before they were ordained.³⁵ The bishop also assisted Philip Sands in drawing up a statement for the officary of the Church to sign, setting forth their opposition to slavery. Asbury gave his reason for this action in the following language: "It appears to me, that we can never fully reform the people, until we reform the preachers; and that hitherto, except purging the travelling connexion, we have been working at the wrong end." Consistency demanded that, if the local preachers were permitted to hold slaves, travelling ministers should be allowed to do likewise, and keep overseers upon their quarters.³⁶

In 1800 the General Conference voted that annual conferences should further the work of emancipation by circulating petitions praying state legislatures to enact laws providing for gradual manumission of slaves, where such laws were not already in existence. Further, they declared that when it was possible to do so, a travelling preacher must free his slaves or "forfeit his ministerial character in the Methodist Episcopal Church."³⁷ A General Conference "Address" was sent to all members and friends of the Church, in which the evils of slavery were set forth, together with the inconsistency of citizens of the United States holding slaves, and the opposition of New Testament teachings to slavery. All members of the Church were urged to aid ministers in carrying out the General Conference rules.³⁸

In at least two conferences anti-slavery action was taken. Officials of Livingston Circuit in the Western conference voluntarily offered to accept the judgment of the quarterly conference on the manumission of their slaves. The record reads: "We, thereby, had the unspeakable pleasure of decreeing salvation from slavery in favor of twenty-two immortal souls; we did not reprobate one of them."³⁹ They asked the Western conference for permission to require slaveholders seeking admission into the Church "to submit their slaves to the judgment of the Conference, who shall determine the time of servitude . . . , and have a bill of manu-

mission recorded in the same manner as the form of Discipline requires for buying a slave."³⁹ Cartwright also cites the South Carolina conference action in 1806. When a slaveholder sought admission into the travelling ministry of the conference he was admitted on trial and assigned to a circuit "*provided* that he make provision for the emancipation of his slaves." When the conference met the following year he "had made a settlement of some character, satisfactory to the Conference, and was accordingly admitted."⁴⁰

The General Conference of 1808 authorized "each annual conference to form their own regulations relative to buying and selling slaves."⁴¹ In the Western conference the preachers were divided but the suggestions of Bishop M'Kendree in favor of drastic action against slavery were cordially received.⁴² Asbury wrote that this conference adopted "a regulation respecting slavery; it was, that no member of (a) society, or preacher, should sell or buy a slave unjustly, inhumanly, or covetously; the case, on complaint, to be examined for a member by the quarterly meeting; and for a preacher an appeal to an annual conference. Where the guilt was proved the offender to be expelled."⁴³ In 1812 the Tennessee conference⁴⁴ examined and finally approved Levin Edney's character, "Learner Blackman being security that he'll set his slave free, when practicable."⁴⁵ That Blackman was to be trusted by the anti-slavery faction is evident from the rules adopted under his leadership. The conference decided that the preacher in charge of a local church should cite members who bought and sold slaves before the ensuing quarterly conference which should determine whether the property in question had been bought or sold because of "justice and mercy"; if a majority decided adversely, the guilty parties were to be expelled immediately. The case might be appealed to the next annual conference.⁴⁶

Three years later, the slavery question again troubled the Tennessee conference. In answer to certain questions asked by Thomas L. Douglas, the conference decided that a person was engaging in the slave trade if he bought or sold slaves, even in order to keep husbands and wives, or parents and children together. Though it might be a case obviously "consistent with justice and mercy," the offender should

be arraigned before the Church officials as though guilty of a crime.⁴⁷

At its first session, the Ohio conference decided that Joseph Oglesby must free "his negro Girl at the age of 25 years together with her posterity if any at the age of 21 years."⁴⁸ Rules, providing for the gradual manumission of all slaves purchased, and the expulsion of church members who sold slaves except at the request of the latter or "to prevent a separation in families," were also adopted. On all other occasions, three non-slaveholders were to decide whether or not the sale was a proper one.⁴⁹ In 1813 consideration of the slavery question was deferred until the following year,⁵⁰ when the former rules were retained.⁵¹

Following the General Conference of 1816,⁵² the Tennessee conference was again concerned with this exciting topic. It was decided that power to deal with cases of slaveholding, among both ministers and laymen, should be vested in the quarterly conferences.⁵³ Peter Cartwright thereupon arraigned slaveholding members in the Tennessee portion of his district. So intense was the feeling against him that Cartwright was put on trial at the conference of 1818. For three days a bitter contest was waged. All attempts to silence Cartwright were unavailing and he finally emerged from the attacks of his enemies victorious. The conference supported Cartwright, not only because of his anti-slavery principles but because the right of free speech was involved. Only three votes were recorded against this valiant leader of anti-slavery Methodists.⁵⁴

By 1819 the strife was still more bitter. The anti-slavery faction retained a majority of five, and harmony was an almost negligible virtue. Two slaveholding applicants for admission to the conference were rejected; when others applied for deacon's⁵⁵ orders, they met the same fate. Even though Gilbert D. Taylor avowed his purpose to free his slaves, he was excluded until manumission was actually accomplished.⁵⁶ It was contended that the action of the conference was contrary to the Methodist Discipline,⁵⁷ but Cartwright was able to cite Andrew Jackson to prove that manumission of slaves was permitted by Tennessee. As a result of Jackson's legal advice, many preachers were compelled to free their slaves. Further, the anti-slavery element

elected delegates to the General Conference of 1820, where, in spite of the work of the pro-slavery party, the action of the Tennessee conference was approved.⁵⁸

By action of the General Conference of 1820 the attack upon slavery was the task of the whole Church rather than of the annual conferences.⁵⁹ In the Tennessee conference, the old dispute broke out afresh, with James Axley and Enoch Moore⁶⁰ leading the anti-slavery forces. Axley opposed slaveholders in official positions and sought to prevent them from preaching. Both ministers carried their propaganda so far that they refused to allow a slaveholder to lead a public prayer-meeting.⁶¹ Again, in 1824,⁶² the slavery question was brought to the attention of the Tennessee conference through "An Address from the Moral Religious Manumission Society of West Tennessee." In reply to this address, the conference said: "We concur in the sentiments that slavery is an evil to be deplored, and that it should be counteracted by every judicious and religious exertion."⁶³

The anti-slavery sentiment of the Methodist Church was also reflected in the official and semi-official publications⁶⁴ of the denomination. In 1819 *The Methodist Magazine* called slavery "the curse of America."⁶⁵ The sympathy of the magazine for negroes was also shown by the account of the sudden death of a master who had ill-treated his slave.⁶⁶ *The Christian Advocate and Journal* was interested in the manumission of slaves in New York.⁶⁷ Lewis Garrett of the Tennessee conference congratulated New York on this work in behalf of humanity, and his message found a place in the official Church paper.⁶⁸

In succeeding years, the *Christian Advocate* continued to testify to the interest of the Church in negroes. People were warned against kidnappers who took negro children from free states to southern markets.⁶⁹ The pity of the editor was further excited by the account of a slave ship which arrived at Havana with three thousand sick slaves, six hundred of whom died. In distress the editor wrote: "Three thousand human beings compressed in the hold of a single ship! Who can imagine the sufferings which these poor creatures endured."⁷⁰ Attention was also given to the activities of anti-slavery societies. At Smithfield, Ohio, a society was organized to aid in abolishing slavery. At least twelve such organizations, patterned after the Maryland Anti-slavery

Society, had been formed by 1827.⁷¹ Memorials from the people of Maine,⁷² and of the Anti-slavery Society of Washington City,⁷³ praying the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia, were also printed.

*Zion's Herald*⁷⁴ was still more enthusiastic in its advocacy of anti-slavery principles. The manumission of slaves in New York was especially commended. Under the heading, "A Proud Day for New York," the editor declared that the action of the state would be a blessing not only to the negroes but also to their owners. The opportunity was seized to urge southern states to provide for gradual emancipation within their own boundaries. The editor was certain that other states would find, as New York had already discovered, that manumission of slaves was not only morally but financially beneficial.⁷⁵

It is apparent that individual leaders, conferences and official publications of the early Methodist Episcopal Church furnished abundant material upon which a partizan could base his contention that Asbury and his contemporaries were abolitionists.⁷⁶ There can be no question that many of them earnestly strove to accomplish the manumission of all slaves by some gradual and humanitarian process. The fact that the "Christmas Conference" of 1784 was so unequivocally opposed to slavery is conclusive evidence that the newly organized Church was uncompromisingly against "the sum of all villainies." To what extent they may have swerved from their original purpose and the reasons for their action will be shown in succeeding chapters.

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1. Townsend, *New History of Methodism*, Volume I., p. 370. The change in the English attitude towards slavery is seen from the fact that Hawkins had as his flagship *The Jesus*. "He ordered his crews 'to serve God daily' and 'to love one another'". (Channing, *History of the United States*, Volume I., p. 116; cf. Thompson, *John Wesley as a social Reformer*, p. 43). The date was 1562.
 2. Wesley, *Journal*, Volume V., pp. 445-6; February 12, 1772.
 3. For a contrary claim see, *The Christian Advocate*, Volume 99, p. 1357; November 6, 1924.
 4. In 1773 a meeting of all American Methodist ministers was held in Philadelphia.
 5. Bangs, *Life of Freeborn Garrettson*, p. 39.
 6. *Ibid.*, p. 60. Methodists were considered disloyal.
 7. Townsend, *A New History of Methodism*, Volume II., p. 80.
 8. Coke, *Journal*, Volume I., p. 33.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 40.
 10. *Ibid.*, p. 41.
 11. *Ibid.*, pp. 42-3.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 35-6.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 69. No trial seems to have been held.
14. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume I., p. 141; June 23, 1776.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 214; June 10, 1778.
16. *Ibid.*, Volume II., p. 305; January 1, 1798.
17. *Ibid.*, Volume III., p. 373; January 8, 1815. Asbury died in March, 1815.

Other individuals continued the struggle against slavery. The father of James B. Finley, convinced that slavery was wrong, freed his fourteen slaves and moved from Kentucky to Ohio. The twelve freedmen who accompanied him were supported for a whole year (Finley, *Autobiography*, pp. 110-11. Finley was at this time—1796—sixteen years of age). At a later time Peter Cartwright did likewise, lest his children marry slaveholders and because of the increasing tendency of the people to justify slavery (Cartwright, *Autobiography*, pp. 244-5). Mr. Willis, a follower of Asbury, was so bold as to preach to five hundred colored people from the text: "And the nation to whom they shall be in bondage will I judge, said God: and after that they shall come forth, and serve me in this place." (Asbury, *Journal*, Volume II., p. 288; June 25, 1797. The text is from Acts 7:7). Equally brave was Jacob Gruber, a Methodist preacher in Maryland. He was arrested and charged with inciting insurrection and insubordination among the slaves. Although he was tried before a slaveholding judge and jury he was acquitted on the ground that he had only exercised his right of free speech. One reason for his success may have been that he was ably defended by Roger B. Taney, afterwards Chief Justice of the Supreme Court and famous for the Dred Scott Decision. The attitude of Gruber towards slavery may be seen from the statement which he made at the time of the trial: "I hope, while I keep my senses, I shall consider *involuntary perpetual slavery* miserable injustice, a system of robbery and theft" (Tyler, *Memoir of Roger Brooke Taney*, pp. 124-31; and *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXVIII., p. 86, col. 4; June 3, 1857). Cartwright says "there can be no doubt that the course pursued by early Methodist preachers was the cause of the emancipation of thousands of this degraded race of human beings."

18. General conferences were held annually until 1796, when quadrennial general conferences were inaugurated, together with the smaller annual conferences composed of the ministers of a certain section.
19. This conference was held in Baltimore (Paine, *Life and Times of McKendree*, Volume I., p. 213).
20. A "travelling preacher" is one, who, in the economy of a church having an itinerant system, travels from place to place under the direction of the appointing power of the annual conference. At present they are fully ordained ministers who, in theory at least, can be sent to any appointment in the conference.
21. Eddy, *Journal* (manuscript), p. 255. See also, Elliott, *The Great Secession*, pp. 31-2; Sunderland, *Anti-Slavery Manual*, p. 60; Armstrong, *History of the Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 48; Dixon, *Methodism in America*, p. 393; Emory, *History of the Discipline*, p. 15.
22. A "local preacher" is one amenable to the District and Annual conferences and under the direction of some ordained minister. He is not a member of the Annual conference.
23. Eddy, *Journal*, p. 255. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 32; Emory, *History of the Discipline*, p. 19; Dixon, *Methodism in America*, p. 393.
24. Eddy, *Journal*, p. 256. Cf. Emory, *History of the Discipline*, p. 21.
25. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume I., p. 378. Coke was also made a general superintendent or bishop at this time.
26. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 33.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 33-4. See also, Long, *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, pp. 27-9. All members of the Methodist Church were required to free their slaves—those between forty and forty-five years by the time they were forty-five years of age; those between twenty-five and forty within five years; those between twenty and twenty-

five by the time they were thirty; all under twenty were to be man-umitted when twenty-five years of age; and all infants at birth. Assistant pastors were required to keep records of all deeds by which slaves were granted their freedom. Because of the newness of the rule, any member who desired to do so might quietly withdraw from the Church within twelve months. Those who bought or sold slaves except for the purpose of freeing them were to be immediately expelled.

28. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 35. Cf. Eddy, *Journal*, p. 256; and Lee, *The Life and Times of Jesse Lee*, p. 160.
29. Coke, *Journal*, Volume I., p. 39.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 43. The slaveholders said: "These Methodists and Baptists will never rest, till they get their knives into our bellies."
31. Coke, *Journal*, Volume I., p. 37.
32. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 37. Elliott emphasized the "or" because it was later changed to "and." In consequence the rule was misinterpreted. See post, p. 116, footnote 57.
33. A quarterly conference is composed of the official members of the local Church.
34. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 22-3 (1796). See also, Strickland, *Life and Times of Francis Asbury*, pp. 146-7.
35. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume II., p. 269; November 25, 1796.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 312; March 25, 1798.
37. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 40-41 (1800).
38. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 41-2 (1800). Cf. Fuller, *An Appeal to the Records*, pp. 36-8.
39. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 15-16.
40. Cartwright, *Fifty Years a Presiding Elder*, pp. 49-50.
41. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 93 (1808).
42. Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., p. 216., Cf. Young, *Autobiography of a Pioneer*, pp. 249-50.
43. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume III., p. 251; October 1, 1808. See also, Sweet, *The Rise of Methodism in the West*, p. 148; and Cartwright, *Fifty Years a Presiding Elder*, p. 54. Asbury places the date of the conference on October 1; the other sources say October 7.
44. The Western Conference was divided in 1812, forming the Tennessee and Ohio conferences (See Sweet, *Circuit Rider Days along the Ohio*, p. 27.)
45. Price, *The Holston Methodism*, pp. 474-5.
46. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 283-4. The following year, one of the local preachers appealed his case to the annual conference. But after a very acrimonious debate, the conference confirmed the decision of the local officials (Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., pp. 288-9).
47. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., p. 400. While Price (*The Holston Methodism*, pp. 213-14) considers this action an unwarranted assumption of power, it is clear that the General Conference of 1812 gave annual conferences the right to change local rules at pleasure. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 41.
48. Sweet, *Circuit-Rider Days along the Ohio*, p. 102.
49. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.
50. *Ibid.*, p. 117.
51. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
52. The General Conference of 1816 left the rule on slavery unchanged. The delegates re-affirmed the opposition of Methodism to slavery, the ineligibility of slaveholders to official positions in the Church, and renewed the requirement that every minister acquiring slaves in any manner emancipate them if it were practicable. As before, the responsibility for carrying out the rules was placed upon the annual conferences (*Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 169-70 (1816). Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, pp. 41-2; Shipp, *Methodism in South Carolina*, pp. 474-5; Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., p. 366).
53. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 461-8. Cf. Price, *The Holston Methodism*, Volume II., pp. 240-43.
54. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 114, col. 4; October 30, 1846.
55. A "deacon" is a minister who has not met all the requirements relative to study and preaching experience. Generally, one more year

- is required to complete the preparation so that he may be an "elder."
56. After vainly petitioning the legislatures of Tennessee and Georgia for permission to free them, he succeeded in Pennsylvania.
 57. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 160-61. Cf. Price, *The Holston Methodism*, Volume II., pp. 253-4; Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., pp. 378-9. Where the laws of the state permitted, ministers were required to free their slaves.
 58. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, pp. 195-6. Cf. Price, *The Holston Methodism*, Volume II., pp. 254-6; and *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 114, col. 4; October 30, 1846.
 59. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 200; and Shipp, *History of Methodism in South Carolina*, p. 475. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 42; and Dixon, *Methodism in America*, p. 396.
 60. Presiding elder and minister respectively.
 61. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 494-5. Cf. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 114, col. 4; October 30, 1846.
 62. The rule of 1820 remained unchanged (*Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 294—1824.)
 63. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume III., p. 271.
 64. The *Methodist Magazine* began publication in 1818, the *Christian Advocate and Journal* in 1826, and *Zion's Herald* in 1823. The first two were official, while the last was supported by the conferences of New England. Inasmuch as these publications circulated in all the conferences of the Church, their attitude towards slavery indicates rather accurately the sentiment of the denomination.
 65. *The Methodist Magazine*, Volume II., p. 185 (1819).
 66. *Ibid.*, Volume III., p. 80 (1820). This story was contained in a letter from Alexander Cummins to James Quinn, dated December 9, 1819.
 67. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume I., p. 131, col. 4; April 21, 1827. An article from the "Morning Star" was quoted, in which the action of the legislature was commended (*Ibid.*, p. 179, col. 3; July 13, 1827).
 68. *Ibid.*, Volume II., p. 19, col. 2; October 5, 1827. The letter was dated August 14, 1827.
 69. *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., p. 55, col. 3; December 4, 1829. The two papers were combined for several years.
 70. *Christian Advocate and Wesleyan Journal and Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., p. 107, col. 2; March 5, 1830.
 71. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume I., p. 131, col. 4; April 21, 1827; and *Ibid.*, Volume II., p. 99, col. 3; February 22, 1828. The Maryland Society was responsible for the repeal of a state law authorizing the immediate sale of all colored persons within the state, who were convicted of petty criminal offenses.
 72. *Christian Advocate and Journal and Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., p. 91, col. 3; February 5, 1830.
 73. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume II., p. 95, col. 3; February 15, 1828.
 74. The first copy of this paper was published January 9, 1823. The first reference to slavery was "The Negro's Prayer" (Volume I., p. 130, col. 1; August 21, 1823).
 75. *Zion's Herald*, Volume V., pp. 102, col. 5 and 103, col. 1; June 27, 1827.
 76. One of the Methodist abolitionists of the period just prior to the Civil War declared that the early leaders of the Methodist Church were "Christian abolitionists, and contended for emancipation" (Long, *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, p. 30.)

CHAPTER II

COMPROMISING PRECEDENTS

From the opposition aroused by Methodist leaders and conferences it is apparent that there was a formidable pro-slavery party both within and without the Church. The strife which Coke and Asbury and their followers had begun¹ was responsible for factions in conferences, legislation in the more extreme states forbidding manumission of slaves, and serious embarrassment to the evangelistic work of the Church.

That Methodists were responsible for much of the adverse action taken by slave states there can be no doubt. In December, 1800, Asbury was informed that the General Conference "address" of that year had been responsible for "a law which prohibited a minister's attempting to instruct any number of blacks with the door shut; and authorized a peace-officer to break open the doors in such cases, and disperse or whip the offenders."² Ministers were forbidden to hold prayer-meetings for slaves before sunrise or after nine o'clock at night. The preachers themselves seem to have approved these restrictions and become a part of the southern system, for Asbury complained that they were "countrymen, and do not speak as boldly as they ought to speak."³

The antagonism of the pro-slavery party may be illustrated by an account which James O. Andrew⁴ contributed in 1830. In the first years of the nineteenth century, two ministers, George Dougherty and John Harper, were stationed at Charleston, South Carolina. Harper received some anti-slavery pamphlets from the North, urging that the South Carolina legislature be memorialized "in behalf of the abolition of slavery." Harper, who deemed it imprudent to engage in the enterprise, showed a copy of the document to a friend. The rumor spread that he was in possession of an abolition document, and Harper was required to make an explanation to a city official. To prevent further difficulty, the pamphlets were burned. Nevertheless, a mob assembled and seized Harper as he left his church. The preacher

managed to escape. The following evening, the rabble returned and, not finding Harper, seized Dougherty and "pumped" him.⁵ From this indignity he was rescued by a lady member of his congregation. Within half a century such treatment would have been considered mild for those having in their possession abolition pamphlets of any kind, but Andrew wrote of these two men and their persecutors: "It has stamped indelible reproach on the memory of the persecutors of religion, encircled with additional laurels the brow of an eminent minister of Jesus Christ."⁶

Not only did the pro-slavery party outside the Church object to prohibitions put upon slavery by the Church, but the slaveholding members did likewise. In North Carolina, Asbury found himself practically helpless in his work among the slaves, not only because of the state laws but also because of the opposition of his own members whom he discovered hiring out their slaves to the highest bidder.⁷ So intense was the hatred of people for Asbury and his principles that the bishop wrote: "Perhaps we shall soon be thought unfit for the company of their dogs."⁸ Asbury discovered that southern people were concerned with such topics as "peace with the Creek Indians, the settlement of new lands, good trade, buying slaves, &c."⁹

There is no evidence to prove that slaveholding Methodists attempted to show that leaders of the Church had actually held slaves and justified the practice. Such, however, was the fact. Wesley administered the rite of baptism to a slaveholder without requiring that his slaves be freed, and refrained from censuring slaveholding Methodists in the United States or West Indies.¹⁰ George Whitefield used slaves in connection with an orphanage in Georgia. He defended his practice with Old Testament examples and clinched "his argument with the declaration that 'hot countries cannot be cultivated without negroes'."¹¹ It was also asserted — and one writer defied any one to prove the contrary¹² — that Coke bought slaves for land which belonged to a mission. In this instance the purchase of slaves was justified because the gift of land was "providential" and slaves were needed to till the soil. Besides, it was held that slaves would receive better treatment at the hands of Methodists than "unawakened" persons.¹³ The only reason that M'Kendree did not buy slaves was because he was advised that "a

slave would not obey him more readily than if he belonged to another.”¹²

The Methodist Episcopal Church may have become a slaveholding institution. The Virginia conference of 1794 was much disturbed by the slavery question. Ministers almost unanimously agreed to free their slaves, provided that the laws of the state in which they resided permitted emancipation. Those who refused to free their slaves were to forfeit their ministerial standing. Where state laws did not allow manumission, the slaves were to be paid for their labor, and at the owner's death were to be left to some “person or persons, or the society, in trust, to bring about their liberty.”¹⁴ By such a provision the Methodist Church might have become a slaveholding denomination.

Leaders of Methodism very early came to the parting of the ways. Anti-slavery sermons, rules and petitions caused the pro-slavery group to refuse Methodists permission to impart religious instruction to slaves. It was apparent that something must be done immediately or the work of the Church would be greatly limited. The situation was all the more serious because most Church members lived in slaveholding states. Three paths were open to Asbury and his contemporaries. First, they might yield completely to the pro-slavery party in the Church. To such a policy probably most of the ministers were opposed. Second, they might hold steadfastly to their original anti-slavery position. If they did it was evident that the Church would become a sectional institution.¹⁵ Or, they could compromise their principles so as to retain slaveholders in the Church and yet oppose slavery in those states in which manumission was not forbidden. When this attitude towards slavery was once taken, it was inevitable that still greater concessions would be made to conciliate southern slaveholders. For good or ill, Methodist leaders made the momentous decision to compromise with a known evil.

To properly understand the attitude and action of early Methodist ministers it should be borne in mind that the attention of Church leaders of that day was fixed upon spiritual and “other-worldly” interests rather than upon the evils of this life. Religion was individual rather than social. If the social ills could be remedied without endangering what was considered the first duty of ministers and Church,

it was well; if there seemed to be a conflict of interests, the souls of men were to be saved even though freedom of their bodies were sacrificed in the process. These ministers were the product of the age in which they lived and remained in perfect harmony with current opinion. Inwardly, they undoubtedly rebelled against the existence in the Church of an evil so repugnant to them, but in the crises which they faced they succumbed to the spirit of compromise. Finally, they became the very incarnation of that spirit when they dealt with the slavery issue.

When Thomas Coke found that his opposition, and that of the Church, to slavery caused the people to turn from the Methodists, he began to suit his addresses and sermons to the wishes of his hearers. While in Virginia he wrote: "Here I bore a public testimony against Slavery, and have found out a method of delivering it without causing a tumult: and that is, by first addressing the Negroes in a very pathetic manner on the Duty of Servants to Masters; and then the Whites will receive quietly what I have to say."¹⁶ By 1787 his ideas had undergone a still further modification, for he confessed that, while he was probably right in his condemnations of slavery, he showed lack of judgment "to deliver them from the pulpit."¹⁷ It was subsequent to this decision that he visited Richmond. While many feared for his life because of his former attitude towards slavery, the governor allowed him to speak in the Court-house and the incident passed off without any disturbance. Coke declared that he was "a plain blunt man, that goes directly on,"¹⁸ but it is wholly improbable that he delivered an abolition sermon on this occasion.

For twenty years after Coke made his discovery, Asbury continued his stubborn opposition to slavery. But in 1807 he completely changed the content of his public addresses to slaves and their owners. To slaves he insisted that they should obey their masters "with fear and trembling" "as unto Christ"; then masters listened quietly to messages intended especially for them. As a result of this method, some twenty whites and as many slaves were converted in a single meeting.¹⁹

Annual and general conferences prior to 1831 illustrate still more fully and conclusively the tendency of the Church to compromise their principles in answer to protests by

slaveholders. So completely did ministers come to share the opinions of slaveholders that the former might, with justice, be charged with being pro-slavery advocates. But the fact is that they compromised their principles with evident reluctance and only gradually came to support the pro-slavery party.

As has been stated in the previous chapter, the conference of 1780 forbade elders to hold slaves. But no provision was made for the punishment of local preachers or laymen who refused to follow the leadership of ordained ministers.²⁰ Weak and ineffective as these regulations were, they were nullified by the Virginia conference which refused to be governed by them, since they believed they were "calculated to irritate the minds of the people, and by no means convince them of their errors."²¹ Because this annual conference refused to obey the General Conference, further concessions were made to slaveholders. Anti-slavery rules were to be enforced only in states which permitted manumission of slaves, and, according to the General Conference action in 1783 local preachers were to be given another year to free their slaves. If they refused they were to be expelled.²² The rules of 1784 were still more drastic, but while local preachers in Pennsylvania, New Jersey and Maryland were to be suspended immediately for non-compliance, those in Virginia were given another year to complete manumission.²³

When the Methodist Episcopal Church was organized in 1784, rules were adopted which, if enforced, would have destroyed slavery within the denomination. But while slaveholders in other states were given one year to obey the rule, those in Virginia were allowed double that period. Further, the incisiveness of the rules was almost entirely destroyed by the provision that they were "to affect the members of our society no further than as they are consistent with the laws of the States in which they reside."²⁴ It was soon apparent that the new rules — even those providing for gradual emancipation — were impracticable. In annual conferences held within six months after the Christmas Conference of 1784 the rules on slavery were suspended "till the deliberation of a future conference," at which time all members were to be given the same period to consider their future relation to slavery. At the expira-

tion of the period agreed upon, the rule against slavery was to be enforced.²⁵ The reason for the action of these conferences is explained by Coke, June 1, 1785, just before he sailed to England: "We thought it prudent to suspend the minute concerning Slavery, on account of the great opposition that had been given it, our work being in too infantile a state to push things to extremity."²⁶

In the Discipline of 1792 nothing remained of the section on slavery except a general denunciation of the evil. Since there was no penalty for those who violated the ideals of the Church, the condemnation was an idle thunderbolt. So reactionary was this General Conference that O'Kelley, who had made an unsuccessful attempt to restrict the power of bishops, unfolded to M'Kendree his plans for a secession from the Methodists and the organization of "*a republican, no slavery glorious Church!*"²⁷

In 1796 the General Conference instructed annual conferences to enforce the rules on slavery.²⁸ Obviously, conferences composed of ministers favorable to slaveholders would not be active in such work. By 1800 the rule was considered so worthless that three proposals were submitted, all of them having as their ultimate purpose the destruction of slavery in the Methodist Episcopal Church. One member suggested that no slaveholder should be admitted into the membership of the Church. Another moved that all negro children belonging to Methodists and born after July 4, 1800 should be emancipated at certain ages to be agreed upon. A third proposed that every slaveholding member of the Church should free all his slaves, the quarterly conference to decide the length of time each slave should serve, unless the laws of the state expressly prohibited emancipation.²⁹ The fact that they were all vetoed by the Conference is conclusive evidence that the Church had no intention of abolishing slavery among members who desired to continue the practice. The further fact that travelling preachers were required to free their slaves only when it was "practicable" is additional proof that opposition to state laws was not intended.³⁰

The spirit of compromise continued to gain ground in 1804. By motion of Freeborn Garrettson, who had formerly been so outspoken against slavery,³¹ the subject was left to the three bishops to "form a section to suit the southern and

northern states as they in their wisdom may think best." Asbury refused to serve and the question was therefore left to the Conference for decision.³² After discussion, the problem was referred to a committee of seven—one from each conference³³—who drew up a report in conformity with Garrettson's resolution.³⁴ In addition, two more important sections were made a part of the report. The first read: "The members of our societies in the States of North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, and Tennessee, shall be exempted from the operation of the above rules." To further re-assure slaveholders, they required "preachers, from time to time, as occasion served, (to) admonish and exhort all slaves to render due respect and obedience to the commands and interests of their respective masters."³⁴

The action of the General Conference of 1808 was a reflection of the surrender made by Asbury in 1807.³⁵ It is true that the attempt to take from the quarterly conferences the responsibility for deciding how long a slave should serve in those states permitting such action ended in failure. Further, a motion to remove the entire section from the Discipline was defeated. The articles in regard to the great evil of slavery; the caution which should be exercised in admitting slaveholders to official positions; and the requirement that slaveholders, before they became officials in the Church, should manumit their slaves, if the state laws permitted, were retained. Ministers were no longer required to urge slaves to be obedient to their masters, but masters were not required to free their slaves. By article three annual conferences were authorized "to form their own regulations relative to buying and selling slaves".³⁶

That the sentiment in favor of compromise was practically unanimous among Church leaders seems to be established beyond cavil when we read in the Journal that it was "moved from the chair that there be one thousand forms of discipline prepared for the use of the South Carolina Conference in which the section and rule on slavery be left out. Carried."³⁷ Lee says that the motion must have been made by Asbury,³⁸ but the evidence is not clear. Some light is thrown on the source of the General Conference resolution by noting the attitude of Asbury and M'Kendree towards anti-slavery legislation in the Tennessee conference of 1808. When they were requested to give their opinions in writing on the sub-

ject of slavery, Bishop Asbury read a paper in which he suggested caution and moderation and discouraged any legislation relative to slavery at that time. His presentation of the conservative viewpoint was received with "dissatisfaction; indeed, it is said that 'the audience hissed him'."³⁹ When the conference expressed a preference for M'Kendree's anti-slavery principles, Asbury answered with a smile and tore up his paper.³⁹

Subsequent to the Tennessee conference, Asbury spoke to large numbers of whites and blacks in Tennessee and met with an encouraging response.⁴⁰ But when he returned to North Carolina and Virginia, the reception by the people was far from cordial.⁴¹ Here, the expurgated edition of the Discipline was not in circulation and the effect on the Church gave Asbury much concern. When Asbury met with the Virginia conference he found a deplorable situation. Compared with three thousand new members in southern states and an equal number in the West, an increase of three hundred in Virginia churches seemed meagre indeed. Although some allowance could be made for losses by removal to the new country, the explanation was still unsatisfactory. Asbury declared: "We are defrauded of great numbers by the pains that are taken to keep the blacks from us — their masters are afraid of the influence of our principles". Having located the chief reason for the confusion of the Church, Asbury asked himself: "Would not *amelioration* in the condition and treatment of slaves have produced more practical good to the poor Africans than an attempt at their *emancipation*?" He declared that the state of society did not allow manumission of slaves; that Methodists were the only ones interested in the welfare of slaves; and that masters would not permit slaves to listen to anti-slavery preachers. Face to face with this condition, Asbury asked: "What is the personal liberty of the African which he may abuse, to the salvation of his soul—how may it be compared?"⁴² Writing of this conference, Lee asserts: "Their present lameness, therefore, and their inability to reach, with the comforts of religion, the poor slave, was the providential exposition and punishment of their unwise and gratuitous legislation upon the subject."⁴³

At the opening of the General Conference of 1812 Asbury desired that few new rules should be added to the

Discipline.⁴⁴ So far as slavery was concerned his wishes were followed. The only mention of slavery in the Journals of this session is a request of D. Young of the Western Conference that the Conference "inquire into the nature and moral tendency of slavery", but the motion was tabled and never considered.⁴⁵ Another source declares that the section on slavery was to be enforced where its provisions did not conflict with the civil law, unless it was considered a case of "mercy or necessity."⁴⁶ Elliot says that the third article was introduced by an explanatory clause, specifically stating that each annual conference was authorized to make its own provisions on the subject of slavery because "the laws of some of the states do not admit of emancipating of slaves, without a special act of the legislature."⁴⁷

In the previous chapter, Learner Blackman was cited as a leader of the anti-slavery faction of Tennessee conference in 1812.⁴⁸ By the following year, however, he had joined the opposition. When a local preacher appealed from the decision of his quarterly conference, Blackman supported him. Blackman declared that the General Rule did not apply in this case; that it was inconsistent to receive and retain members who owned slaves, and exclude those who bought them; that this preacher had been controlled by the most humane feelings; and that the Nashville quarterly conference had, in other cases, considered it no more evil for ministers to hold slaves than for members to do so. He insisted that great harm had already been done by this meddling with people's legal and private affairs; and that, since he could see no moral wrong in the transaction, if the slave were treated humanely, he would refuse to conform to the decision of the conference. Bishop M'Kendree rebuked Blackman and reminded him that he "ought to keep the rule or change it."⁴⁹ It is true that the conference supported the quarterly conference rather than Blackman, but this increasing opposition was a constant source of trouble for the anti-slavery party.⁴⁹

Reference has been made to radical action taken in Tennessee conference in 1815, relative to buying and selling slaves.⁵⁰ But this was only an attempt to interpret existing rules. That these rules were unsatisfactory to the majority of the conference there is no doubt. On motion of Peter Cartwright, a committee of five was appointed to draft rules

on buying and selling slaves. The report, which was adopted, affirmed their belief that slavery was a moral evil, but declared that, since some states did not permit emancipation except by special act of the legislatures, they could not compel their members to liberate their slaves. Although they admitted that it was impossible to make regulations to meet every situation, they proposed two rules as the judgment of the conference. First, mercenary buying or selling of slaves was prohibited, but this did not apply to any person who bought or sold slaves in order to keep members of families together. Secondly, no person was eligible to the office of deacon unless he assured officials of the conference "sentimentally, in person or by letter, that he disapproves of slavery and declares his willingness and intention to execute, whenever it be practicable, a legal emancipation of such slave or slaves, conformably to the laws of the State in which he lives."⁵¹

The delegates to the General Conference of 1816 were much disturbed by the slavery question. A memorial on slavery from some Methodists on Staunton Circuit, Virginia, was referred to a select committee of nine. The committee reported that they had seriously considered the subject and were of the opinion that, "under present existing circumstances in relation to slavery, little can be done to abolish a practice so contrary to the principles of moral justice. They are sorry to say that the evil appears to be past remedy; and they are led to deplore the destructive consequences which have already accrued, and are yet likely to result therefrom." They declared that laws of southern and western states forbade emancipation, and that changing civil laws was not within the province of the General Conference.⁵²

The demoralization of the anti-slavery forces is no more clearly seen than in the Tennessee conference of 1816.⁵³ Hardy M. Cryer had been required by the preceding conference to endeavor to emancipate his slaves, and a report was to be made to the conference. He declared that he could not succeed in the endeavor, and the conference approved his report. He then stated that, within the year, he had bought another slave. An inquiry was immediately made into this new case. The presiding officer, Bishop Roberts, decided that the rule had not been violated. Cryer's character was then passed and he was elected elder. All this

was accomplished apparently with little debate and less investigation.⁵⁴ In fact, so discouraged were the anti-slavery faction that several ministers migrated to Ohio during this and succeeding years.

As a result of this migration, the conservative and pro-slavery faction gained control of the conference. This fact is undoubtedly responsible for the action in 1818, by which all previous rules were repealed and the following resolution adopted: "Resolved, That we receive the printed rule on Slavery, in the form of Discipline as full and sufficient on that subject."⁵⁵ Since the General Conference of 1816 empowered annual conferences to make and enforce rules on slavery, the resolution could only mean that nothing prejudicial to slaveholding would be done in Tennessee conference. While attempts were made to enforce previous anti-slavery legislation, radicalism in Tennessee and Kentucky was fighting a losing battle. After 1820 the extreme anti-slavery group was almost completely robbed of power.

The Ohio conference was decidedly anti-slavery in 1812.⁵⁶ But in succeeding years opposition to slavery gradually declined. In 1813, the report on slavery was carried over until 1814,⁵⁷ when it was decided to retain the previous regulations.⁵⁸ But it is significant that, after 1812, no trial, involving anyone's relation to slavery, was brought before this conference. In 1817, "the conference rescinded their written rules on the buying and selling slaves."⁵⁹

During the decade following 1820, the tendency of Methodism was against any action which would utterly destroy slaveholding by Church members. The General Conference of 1820 prescribed no penalty for the holding of slaves by members, and the rule, as before, was so worded that it had little or no effect in sections where slaveholding was most extensive.⁶⁰ The refusal of General and annual conferences to enact any legislation which interfered with slaveholding became more and more noticeable.⁶¹ One candidate was refused ordination by Virginia conference in 1825 "for disaffection to our government," the reason for the refusal being an attack upon slavery.⁶² In 1828 an attempt was made by members of the General Conference to pass a resolution, by which slaveholders who treated their slaves inhumanely, either by refusing them proper care or separating, by means of purchase or sale, members of families,

should be brought to trial and treated as in cases of immorality. But the resolution was tabled and never considered.⁶³

While various Church publications printed articles which were anti-slavery in tone,⁶⁴ it is to be noted that no writer contended for immediate, unconditional emancipation. It is true that they condemned the African slave trade, but that traffic was under the ban of the law. The domestic slave trade was protected by state and national laws, and with slavery thus protected Methodist leaders did not interfere. There is no shred of evidence to show that any Methodist conference ever condemned — or supported — the Missouri Compromise in 1820.

The unwillingness of influential preachers to condemn slavery may be shown by two illustrations. Cartwright wrote: I believe, from more than twenty years' experience as a travelling preacher in slave states, that the most successful way to ameliorate the condition of the slaves, and Christianize them and finally secure their freedom, is to treat their owners kindly, and not to meddle politically with slavery."⁶⁵ The editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, in an article entitled "Slavery", said: "The question submitted to us by 'A Female Member of the Methodist Episcopal Church', on the subject of slavery, involves considerations too weighty for us to decide upon. We are not sufficiently acquainted with local circumstances and other peculiarities in this case, to enable us to judge for another. All we can say is, in the language of the apostle, 'If thou mayest be free, use it rather.'"⁶⁶ It seems impossible that any slaveholder would ever cancel his subscription through fear that this editor was attempting to organize a slave insurrection!

A review of the first half century of legislation by the Methodist Episcopal Church shows that, while many leaders were personally opposed to slavery, they immediately compromised their principles that the Church might grow and the slaves be evangelized. It has been demonstrated that conferences — both General and annual — took different attitudes on the question of slavery. Sometimes they reversed their own action in the same session. With such a bewildering diversity of legislation, it was possible for their successors to prove that the Church was opposed to slavery and slaveholders; and also that it had compromised on the "sum of all villainies."

1. *Supra*, pp. 1-3.
2. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume III., pp. 8-9; December 21, 1800.
3. *Ibid.*, p. 215; February 5, 1807.
4. He became a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church and later the first bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. It was over Andrew that the notable contest of 1844 was waged.
5. That is, he was held under a pump while water was pumped into his face.
6. *Andrew, Rise and Progress of Methodism in Charleston, South Carolina (The Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review, Volume XII.—New Series, Volume I.—1830, pp. 21-2.)*
7. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume II., p. 273; December 24, 1796.
8. *Ibid.*, Volume III., pp. 13-14; January 30, 1801.
9. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume II., p. 97; March 13, 1791.
10. Norwood, Schism in the Methodist Church, p. 15, footnote 28.
11. Townsend, *New History of Methodism*, Volume I., p. 272.
12. *Virginia Sermon Pamphlets, Volume 2—An Address to the People of the County of Accomac*, by George P. Scarborough and fifteen others.
13. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 9, col. 1; June 27, 1845. Cf. *South-Western Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 7, col. 1; December 13, 1844.
14. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume II., pp. 208-9.
15. Even in the North it is to be doubted whether anti-slavery principles would have been accepted with any enthusiasm at this time.
16. *Coke, Journal*, Volume I., p. 37.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 69.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 70-71.
19. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume III., p. 215; February 4, 1807.
20. *Eddy, Journal*, p. 255. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, pp. 31-2; *Sunderland, Anti-Slavery Manual*, p. 60; *Armstrong, History of the Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 48; *Dixon, Methodism in America*, p. 393; *Emory, History of the Discipline*, p. 15.
21. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, pp. 31-2; *Armstrong, History of the Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 48.
22. *Eddy, Journal*, p. 255. Cf. *Emory, History of the Discipline*, p. 19.
23. *Eddy, Journal*, p. 255. See also, *Emory, History of the Discipline*, p. 21.
24. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, pp. 33-4. Cf. Long, *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, pp. 27-9.
25. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 35. See also, *Eddy, Journal*, p. 256; and Lee, *Life and Times of Jesse Lee*, p. 160.
26. *Coke, Journal*, Volume I., p. 46.
27. Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., p. 139.
28. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 22-3 (1796). Cf. *Strickland, Life and Times of Francis Asbury*, pp. 302-3.
29. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 40-41 (1800).
30. *Ibid.*, p. 44. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 39; and *Emory, History of the Discipline*, p. 375-6.
31. *Supra*, p. 1.
32. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 60 (1804).
33. *Ibid.*, p. 61 (1804).
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3. Cf. *Shipp, History of Methodism in South Carolina*, p. 474; and Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 40.
35. *Supra*, p. 16.
36. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 93 (1808). See also, Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 41. Elliott does a rather skillful piece of work in his attempt to gloss over the action of the General Conference. The Journals furnish the needed corrective.
37. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 93 (1808).
38. He contends that the motion must have been made by Asbury, since M'Kendree had never been south in a ministerial capacity, except in Virginia, and was therefore unfamiliar with that section; while Asbury, who had been in the South for the previous twenty-three years, was fully acquainted with the slavery situation. (Lee, *Life and Times of Jesse Lee*, pp. 444-5). But Bishop Paine, the biographer of M'Kendree, maintains that the latter was born and reared in the midst of slavery, and that his parents and nearest kindred were slaveholders (Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., pp. 212-15). It is to be noted that a semi-official

- statement of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, attributes the motion to Asbury (Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 83). Whatever decision may be rendered on this incident, it is perfectly clear that the Conference was determined that the evil of slavery should not disrupt the Church or impede its work in redeeming the souls of men, even though their bodies were left in subjection (Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, pp. 157-8). After such far-reaching compromises it is not strange that Asbury recorded nothing in his Journal regarding the action of the General Conference on slavery (Asbury, *Journal*, Volume III., pp. 243-4; May, 1808).
39. Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., p. 216. From the action of these two bishops at the Tennessee conference I incline to the opinion that Asbury rather than M'Kendree made the motion in General Conference.
 40. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume III., p. 254; November 21, 1808.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 257; February 1, 1809. Cf. Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., pp. 219-20.
 42. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume III., pp. 257-8; February, 1809.
 43. Lee, *Life and Times of Jesse Lee*, p. 460.
 44. Asbury, *Journal*, Volume III., p. 326; May 1, 1812. The General Conference was held in New York.
 45. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 121 (1812).
 46. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 166.
 47. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 41. Cf. Henckle, *The Life of Henry Bidleman Bascom*, p. 115.
 48. *Supra*, p. 6.
 49. Paine, *Life and Times of Bishop M'Kendree*, Volume I., pp. 288-9.
 50. *Supra*, pp. 6-7.
 51. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 401-2. Price (The Holston Methodism, pp. 215-16) affirms that, for the most part, all provisions for eradicating slavery in the Church remained a dead letter, but that this action was a disturbing element among the ministers.
 52. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 139, 169-70 (1816).
 53. Slaves had to be freed if it were "expedient."
 54. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 461-8. Cartwright (Autobiography, pp. 156-7) proves conclusively that radicalism was not triumphant in Tennessee conference in 1816. "No question gave us much trouble at that time. It is true slavery was a troublesome matter to legislate on; but the one-eyed creature called Rabid Abolitionism had, at that time, been just born, and had but just cut its teeth, and could not bite hard; and it is a notorious fact that all the preachers from the slaveholding states denounced slavery as a moral evil . . ."
 55. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume III., pp. 19-20.
 56. *Supra*, p. 7.
 57. Sweet, *Circuit-rider Days along the Ohio*, p. 117.
 58. *Ibid.*, p. 127.
 59. *Ibid.*, p. 158. More than a quarter of a century was to elapse before the Ohio conference took action against slavery.
 60. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 200. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 42.
 61. Within the writer's knowledge there is no evidence to show that any northern annual conference except the Ohio passed a resolution against slavery prior to 1835.
 62. Bennett, *Memorials of Methodism in Virginia*, p. 709.
 63. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 337-57 (1828).
 64. *Supra*, pp. 8-9.
 65. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, p. 422.
 66. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume V., p. 14, col. 5; September 24, 1830.

CHAPTER III

PHILANTHROPIC PRECEDENTS

In preceding chapters we have considered the attitude of Methodist leaders and the legislation of various conferences on slavery. The effect which Methodist rules had on slaveholders was especially emphasized. Further, it was shown that the reaction of slaveholders to anti-slavery legislation of the Church produced very noticeable changes in the rules adopted by official conferences.

During the period from 1780 to 1831 another question pressed for an answer: namely, "What disposition shall be made of the negro?" Three solutions were proposed. The first was that slaves should be freed and allowed to remain in the state in which they were then living or remove to another state. The second suggestion was that the negroes remain slaves, but that the Church do everything possible, short of emancipation, to ameliorate the condition of slaves. The third, and perhaps the most popular of all, was that slaves should be freed, on condition that they become colonists in Africa.

The first demand of Methodist leaders was that slaves should be freed, either immediately or gradually. Some of the early arguments and sermons of Asbury and Coke can mean nothing else than that they believed emancipation to be the only true and just solution of this problem. Followers of Asbury, such as Willis and Gruber,¹ were equally determined in their efforts to secure manumission of slaves. Indeed, if they had been made a half century later, their statements would have been considered incendiary in character.

The natural result was that slaveholders refused to belong to a Church whose leaders harbored and furthered anti-slavery principles, and Methodist ministers were denied free access to the slave population. At Georgetown, South Carolina, Asbury records that, while there were a hundred negro members, there were only seven or eight white

Methodists, "our doctrine being too close, and our discipline too strict."² As has been shown,³ many laws were passed and almost insurmountable obstacles placed in the path of the Church which attempted to destroy slavery. The work of Methodists among the slaves threatened to end in failure. It remained for ecclesiastical leaders to try conciliation and amelioration where uncompromising radicalism had been demonstrated a failure.

It was in 1778 that Asbury wrote relative to emancipationists and slaves: "But there is cause to presume, that some are more intent on promoting the freedom of their bodies, than the freedom of their souls; without which they must be the vassals of Satan in eternal fire."⁴ Most of the Methodist legislation on this phase of the question seems to have been passed for the purpose, first of all, to save the souls of slaves, without regard to the state of their bodies. In 1780, when the first rules relative to slavery were passed, due regard was shown for the interests of both slaves and their owners. They determined that the assistant pastor should "meet the colored people himself, and appoint as his helpers, in his absence, proper white persons, and not permit them to stay late, and meet by themselves."⁵ Four years later, the Christmas conference specifically ordered that slaves should receive religious instruction.⁶ In 1785 ministers were required to "leave nothing undone for the spiritual benefit and salvation" of slaves. Societies were to be organized among those slaves who seemed most religious.⁷ In 1790, provision was made for the teaching of "learning and piety" to servants. Sunday schools were to be organized for all negroes who would attend and who showed ability to learn.⁷ In 1824 the General Conference required all ministers to urge upon their members the necessity of teaching slaves to read the Bible and of permitting them to attend Church services.⁸

The responsibility of the Church for the salvation of slaves was clearly recognized. The Rev. Stephen Olin delivered an address before the Missionary Society of South Carolina conference in January, 1824, in which he declared: "Our forefathers, together with a rich inheritance of moral and political advantages, have left to our sympathies and our piety, the . . . charge of an exotic population, unrighteously introduced amongst us, whose existence is the worst foe

to our prosperity, and whose rapid multiplication looks, with a threatening aspect upon the perpetuity of our happy institutions." He declared that much was being done for the negroes. "Religion freely admits them to her churches, her instructions, and her sacraments."⁹ The report of the same society for this year substantiated Olin's statement. "That we hold in the membership of the Church within our Conference, thirteen thousand negroes, will be admitted as evidence that they are not forgotten among the multitudes whom we serve." The only boon they asked was "a free, unsuspected, universal access to them."¹⁰

Not only did the Methodist Church permit negroes to become members but they were occasionally used as preachers. Asbury ordained a negro, probably as a local preacher. He was immediately charged with having ordained a slave. His Journal reads: "A charge had been brought against me for ordaining a slave, but there was no farther pursuit of the case when it was discovered that I was ready to prove his freedom; the subject of the contention was nearly white, and his *respectable* father would neither own nor manumit him."¹¹ In 1824 the General Conference ruled that colored preachers and official members should have the same privileges as whites where the usages of the country did not prohibit the exercise of such privileges. If there were enough negro preachers to justify their organization, separate conferences might be formed. Negro preachers might be employed to travel and preach, if their services were judged necessary, provided that they met all the disciplinary requirements.¹²

What was the nature of messages delivered to slaves? It is probable that most sermons to negroes, like those to whites, dealt with individual salvation from unbelief and immortality. But preachers carefully protected the interests of slaveholders. When Coke first began to compromise on slavery he was able to secure the good will of masters by first insisting that slaves be obedient to their owners.¹³ Asbury gave expression to the same thought when he preached from the text found in Ephesians vi. 5-8: "Servants, be obedient to them that are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in singleness of your heart, as unto Christ, doing the will of God from the heart; with good will doing service, as to the Lord, and not to men; knowing that what-

soever good thing any man doeth, the same shall he receive of the Lord, whether he be bound or free."¹⁴ In 1804 the sentiment of Coke and Asbury was embodied in the law of the Church. The rule read: "Let our preachers, from time to time, as occasion serves, admonish and exhort all slaves to render due respect to the commands and interests of their respective masters."¹⁵

Church leaders were much gratified over the smallest evidences of success among the negroes. Asbury even noted the case of an old negress who was freed by her master "*because she had too much religion for him.*"¹⁶ Without doubt, Asbury was overjoyed at the news of wonderful revivals in Kentucky and the South, where between four and five thousand negroes were received into the membership of various churches.¹⁷ Especially did he rejoice when the West and the South each showed a gain of three thousand new members.¹⁸ In 1820 it was stated that "many of the people of colour" had joined the Methodist societies and that many more had "been awakened and converted to God, but from a variety of causes, could not join (the) society."¹⁹

While the anti-slavery legislation of the Church continued to hamper the Methodist work among the slaves, yet as a result of the greater consideration given to their needs and the desires of slaveholders, the number of negro Methodists steadily increased. In 1787 the number of negro Methodists was 3,893; by 1790 it had reached 11,682.²⁰ In the decade from 1793 to 1803 about five thousand more were received as members — slightly more than the increase for the period 1790 to 1793. Of these five thousand, almost four thousand were added during 1802 and 1803.²¹ By 1817 negroes in the Methodist Church numbered over 43,000.²² During the succeeding six years only about 1500 more became members.²³ In 1830 the records showed that, of the total membership of 471,791, 69,230 were negroes.²⁴

Negro Methodists were largely in the South. In 1797, only 588 negro members were north of Mason and Dixon's line, and only 99 negro Methodists were west of the Appalachian mountains.²⁵ Twenty years later there were almost 2400 in the West, and 1581 in the Genessee, New York and New England conferences.²² In 1830, the records show that, of the negro Methodists, New England conferences had

only 263, while the Philadelphia, Baltimore, Virginia, South Carolina and Georgia conference had 52,975.²⁴ It is obvious that evangelization of negroes was confined largely to the older slaveholding states, and that it was being accomplished by preachers who had the confidence of the planters. That the methods used had the approval of conservatives is evidenced by the statement of Cartwright: "Let the owners see and know that your whole mission is the salvation of the slaves as well as their owners, and that you have not established any underground railroad, and that it is not your mission to abduct their slaves. In this way more is to be done for the final extirpation of American slavery than all others put together for these ultraists breathe nothing but death and slaughter."²⁶

The third method by which early Methodists sought to improve the condition of slaves was the colonization in Africa of such as owners might be induced to set free. "The National Colonization Society of America"²⁷ had the official endorsement of the Methodist Episcopal Church. In 1824, the General Conference received a communication from the Society, but nothing seems to have been done at that time.²⁸ But four years later, the General Conference heartily approved the work of the Colonization Society because an opportunity would thereby be given for missionary work in Africa.²⁹ The Baltimore and Virginia conferences in the South,³⁰ and the New York conference in the North,³¹ adopted resolutions in favor of colonizing freedmen. In Tennessee conference, colonization and emancipation societies were formed to counteract the work of radicals.³²

Methodist publications also indicated that colonizationists had the support of the Church. *Zion's Herald* urged New Englanders not to condemn southerners for holding slaves, and called attention to the fact that many early New England fortunes had been accumulated through the slave trade. It was also pointed out that New Englanders had attempted to enslave the Indians but had failed because the latter preferred death to slavery. Thus, not from choice, but from necessity, they had surrendered the idea of enslaving the indigenous population. It was further maintained that the Colonization Society did not touch the negro as a slave but only as a freedman. It was believed that American negroes

would be able to establish a free government in Africa, and that they could evangelize the natives.³³

The opinion that slaves in this country and the natives of Africa would both be benefitted by the work of the Colonization Society was omnipresent in the minds of many writers of that period. Lewis Garrett of Tennessee conference declared that, although much was being done to enlighten the people in foreign lands, very little was being accomplished in behalf of ignorant and degraded slaves of America, except the establishment of a few Sunday Schools. The Colonization Society seemed to be very important in furthering the interests of slaves.³⁴ In 1830, the New York Colonization Society declared that there were about fifteen hundred freedmen in Liberia,³⁵ and added: "The advantages which may be expected to result to our own country, from the removal of our free coloured population, are too obvious to require comment."³⁶

Official papers also encouraged the work of the Society. Ministers were urged to carry out the program of Methodism and the Society in behalf of the freedmen.³⁷ The Society's statements were published, in which officers told of forwarding slaves to Liberia,³⁸ of the appointment of an educated negro as superintendent of Liberia schools,³⁹ and of an article in the "African Repository", addressed to the women of the United States, in behalf of these schools.⁴⁰ Addresses to the free colored population, in which an attempt was made to get them to become colonists in Africa,⁴¹ accounts of the manumission of many slaves in the South for the purpose of colonizing them,⁴² and statements relative to the Society's advancement,⁴³ were also given considerable space. The ninth report of the Vermont Colonization Society, dated October 17, 1828, was printed, together with the news of the organization of new societies and the raising of money with which to send freedmen to Africa.⁴⁴ By 1829 it was reported that eleven commonwealths had state colonization societies.⁴⁵

Subscriptions for sending negroes to Africa seem to have been very gratifying to colonizationists and Methodist editors. A proposal was made to raise \$700,000 annually to remove freedmen to Africa, since southerners were opposed to freeing slaves and permitting them to remain in the South.⁴⁶ The result was far short of the desired amount but

progress was recorded. An audience in New York contributed over \$200,⁴⁷ while Gerritt Smith donated \$1000.⁴⁸ Thirty-nine people in New York subscribed thirty dollars each, the latter sum being estimated as the cost of sending one negro to Africa.⁴⁹ In 1830 the receipts of the Colonization Society amounted to \$27,209.⁵⁰

That Methodist leaders were in earnest in their advocacy of the colonization movement seems apparent. One writer, who commended the editor of *Zion's Herald* for his interest in the transportation of freedmen, asked: "*Why is it, that there is, at this time, in these United States, ONE MILLION and a HALF of our fellow beings held in abject slavery — by Americans contrary to the express declaration of the independence of these United Colonies, and by Christians — contrary to the spirit and design of the gospel of the Son of God.*"⁵¹ Colonization would, of course, solve the problem.

The author of the above quotation might easily become a follower of Garrison. But that most Methodists entertained no radical anti-slavery views was due primarily to the fact that the negro was considered undesirable in northern as well as southern states. Cincinnati required free colored people to give bonds if they continued to live in the city. So harshly were negroes treated that an appeal for funds was made so that these people might be sent to Canada.⁵² The negro colony of about seven hundred persons finally left Cincinnati and obtained a grant of 25,000 acres of land in Upper Canada, where they were cordially received, and their children permitted to attend the public schools without charge.⁵³ The editor of Methodism's only official paper made no protest against this action; he was interested primarily in ridding the country of negroes. And the editor of *Zion's Herald* proved himself at one with the South when he wrote: "Let no one for a moment imagine that the revolt of the oppressed will find one advocate at the north or that every arm will not be raised to protect the precious lives of our dear countrymen."⁵⁴

For half a century after the first anti-slavery rules were adopted, Methodist leaders sought to solve the problem of the Church's duty toward the slaves. Manumission as a practical policy proved a failure and threatened the destruction of the Church; conservatism temporarily saved the denomination from division and promoted the spiritual wel-

fare of the slaves. In a comparatively few instances the freedom of slaves was secured through the Colonization Society.

It is apparent that precedents had been established by which advocates of any particular theory of the relation of the Church to slavery could prove that the "Fathers" fully sustained them. A study of the evidence indicates that each faction failed, or perhaps refused, to see the strength of their opponents' position. This is especially true after William Lloyd Garrison issued his challenge to slaveholders and conservatives, in which he demanded the immediate abolition of slavery.

1. *Supra*, p. 10, footnote 17.
2. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume II., p. 274; December 28, 1796.
3. *Supra*, pp. 13-14.
4. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume I., p. 214; June 10, 1778.
5. *Eddy, Journal*, p. 255. Cf. *Elliott, The Great Secession*, pp. 31-2; *Sunderland, Anti-Slavery Manual*, p. 60; *Armstrong, History of the Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 48; *Dixon, Methodism in America*, p. 393; *Emory, History of the Discipline*, p. 15.
6. *Elliott, The Great Secession*, p. 33. Cf. *Long, Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, pp. 27-9.
7. *Elliott, The Great Secession*, p. 36. Cf. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume II., p. 25; *Harrison, The Gospel among the Slaves*, p. 54 (Date placed at 1787); *Finley, Autobiography*, p. 389 (Date placed at 1786). There is either an error or else the same rule was passed in successive years.
8. *Journal of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 294 (1824). Cf. *Clark, Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 297; and *Elliott, The Great Secession*, p. 42.
9. *The Methodist Magazine*, Volume VII., pp. 306-7 (1824).
10. *Ibid.*, p. 198. "We know no evil to which the slave is subject, that may be compared with his so frequent, total destitution of the means of grace. We honestly believe that all the circumstances of his condition taken together, as they are known to us, the negro in the Carolinas and Georgia, might on no temporal account, envy the peasant of some other Christian countries. Yea, more: we believe that many thousands of them are both better fed and clothed—and labour less—and are better attended to in sickness, than many of the white population of this, happiest of all countries."
11. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume III., p. 323; February, 1812.
12. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 294 (1824).
13. *Supra*, p. 16.
14. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume III., p. 215; February 4, 1807.
15. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 62-3 (1804). Cf. *Shipp, History of Methodism in South Carolina*, p. 474; *Elliott, The Great Secession*, p. 40.
16. *Asbury, Journal*, Volume II., p. 87; November 4, 1790. Afterwards, *Asbury* felt constrained to reprove himself for a "sudden and violent laugh" over the story.
17. *Harrison, The Gospel among the Slaves*, p. 63.
18. *Supra*, p. 20.
19. *The Methodist Magazine*, Volume III., p. 316 (1820).
20. *Lee, Life and Times of Jesse Lee*, p. 175.
21. *Harrison. The Gospel among the Slaves*, pp. 61, 64.
22. *Methodist Magazine*, Volume I., p. 75 (1818). There were 537 in Ohio conference, 73 in Missouri, 410 in Mississippi, 77 in Genesee conference, and 16,789 in South Carolina.
23. *Ibid.*, Volume VI., p. 359 (1823). This is the net increase after

deducting the number of those who had died, been expelled or had removed to another section of the country without joining the Church there.

24. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume IV., p. 207, col. 2; August 27, 1830. Cf. *Ibid.*, Volume VI., p. 38, col. 5; November 4, 1831.
25. Harrison, *The Gospel among the Slaves*, p. 61. In 1792 there were 176 negro members in the West—the largest number during the years from 1787 to 1797.
26. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, p. 422.
27. For the organization of the Colonization society, see, *Encyclopedia Britannica*—article on "Colonization Society." The fact that men like William Ellery Channing, Benjamin Lundy, Gerritt Smith and James G. Birney gave their enthusiastic support to this organization shows that slaveholders and anti-slavery advocates were agreed as to the value and practicability of the scheme. Later, when it was thought that the purpose of the society was to further oppress the slaves, radical anti-slavery men withdrew their support and joined William Lloyd Garrison and other extremists. For the latter development, see Wilson, *Rise and Fall of the Slave Power in America*, Volume I., pp. 208-22.
28. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 271 (1824).
29. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume II., p. 167, col. 3; June 20, 1828.
30. *Ibid.*, Volume I., p. 146, col. 4; May 19, 1827.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 162, col. 5; June 15, 1827.
32. McFerrin, *Methodism in Tennessee*, Volume II., pp. 494-5. Cf. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 114, col. 4; October 30, 1846.
33. *Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., No. 41, p. 3, col. 2; October 11, 1826.
34. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume II., p. 19, col. 2; October 5, 1827. The letter was dated August 14, 1827.
35. In 1823 there were only about 190 free negroes in Liberia. See *Methodist Magazine*, Volume VI., pp. 347-50 (1823).
36. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume IV., p. 162, col. 2; June 11, 1830.
37. *Ibid.*, Volume III., p. 158, col. 5; June 5, 1829. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 159, col. 1; June 5, 1829 and *Ibid.*, p. 171, col. 2; June 16, 1829.
38. *Ibid.*, Volume II., p. 55, col. 2; December 7, 1827. Cf. *Ibid.*, Volume III., p. 66, col. 5; December 26, 1828 and *Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., No. 41, p. 2, col. 1; October 11, 1826.
39. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume IV., p. 15, col. 4; September 25, 1829.
40. *Ibid.*, Volume V., p. 160, cols. 4-5; June 3, 1830.
41. *Ibid.*, Volume II., p. 81, cols. 2-4; January 25, 1828.
42. *Ibid.*, Volume V., p. 31, col. 3; October, 1830.
43. *Zion's Herald*, Volume V., No. 2, p. 3, col. 1; January 10, 1827.
44. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume III., p. 45, cols. 2-3; November 21, 1828.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 91, col. 3; February 6, 1829.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 181, col. 3—182, col. 1; July 17, 1829.
47. *Ibid.*, Volume IV., pp. 30, col. 5-31, col. 1; October 23, 1829.
48. *Ibid.*, Volume II., p. 131, col. 5; April 17, 1828.
49. *Ibid.*, Volume III., p. 179, col. 3; June 30, 1829.
50. *Ibid.*, Volume VI., p. 51, col. 4; November 25, 1831. Even if the \$700,000 had been raised annually, it would have been less than half the amount which England appropriated for the abolition of slavery in the British possessions. 300,000 pounds was annually appropriated by Parliament for that purpose. See *Ibid.*, Volume III., p. 135, col. 4; April 24, 1829.
51. *Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., No. 44, p. 1, cols. 1-2; November 1, 1826.
52. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume III., p. 203, col. 3; August 21, 1829.
53. *Ibid.*, Volume V., p. 107, col. 4; March 4, 1830.
54. *Zion's Herald*, Volume IV., No. 41, p. 3, col. 2; October 11, 1826.

PART II

THE PERIOD OF AGITATION

CHAPTER IV

CONSERVATIVE METHODISM

For almost a century prior to the era of William Lloyd Garrison, anti-slavery advocates had used their influence to secure manumission of slaves. The Friends, the Revolutionary patriots who subscribed in a practical way to the ideals of the Declaration of Independence, and some southern leaders of the first part of the nineteenth century, attempted to destroy slavery in the United States. Of anti-slavery leaders just before 1831 may be mentioned Benjamin Lundy, John Rankin, and James G. Birney.¹ By that date, however, the anti-slavery movement seemed to be almost dead.²

Several factors were responsible for the anti-slavery movement after 1831. The manumission of slaves in the West Indies, the new sympathy for unfortunates in public institutions, the development of manufacturing, and the conviction of some, even in slave states, that slavery was wrong, all aided in creating public sentiment in favor of the manumission of slaves.³ But undoubtedly the most important factor of all was William Lloyd Garrison. From January 1, 1831, when the first number of *The Liberator* was published, a hatred hitherto unknown divided the people into two increasingly hostile camps. To the North, the tirades of Garrison constituted a call to repentance; to the South, his denunciations were warnings that the southern "institution" was in danger. As for the churches, Garrison's propaganda meant the schism of several of them, and the weakening of the bonds which bound others together.

The influence of Garrison upon the Methodist Episcopal Church was not immediately apparent. Undoubtedly, there were many members and ministers who were personally opposed to slavery, yet until the outbreak of the Civil War the conservative party was very powerful. Conservatism was the watchword of the Church; and bishops, conferences and

official papers conformed to the wishes of the vast majority of the people of the Church and Nation.

Two events in 1832 illustrate this tendency against radicalism. In January, Bishop Hedding presided over the Georgia conference. In Augusta, he witnessed the sale of a slave, and expressed his indignation to another northerner who was present.⁴ A few days later, a minister informed him that the conversation had been reported and had caused considerable excitement. The bishop was advised to be more prudent in his remarks upon the subject of slavery. And, according to his biographer, Hedding "did not consider it unwise to follow the counsels of his brother preacher."⁵

In May of the same year the General Conference met at Philadelphia. May 2, a motion was made which provided for a committee of seven who should "take into consideration the conditions, privileges, and rights of our people of color." They were also empowered to review the section on slavery in the Discipline and "report what (if any) alterations ought to be made in the same." Another resolution was offered instructing this committee "to inquire into the proper meaning of the clause in the General Rules concerning the buying or selling of men, women and children, with an intention to enslave them." On the following day, Wilbur Fisk moved that consideration of the latter resolution be indefinitely postponed.⁶ May 16, the "Committee on the Rights and Privileges of the People of Color" reported—and the report was tabled.⁷ Nine days later, the Committee was given permission to withdraw their report.⁸ Later in the Conference, the chairman of the committee returned the papers which had been referred to them, and made a statement that it was considered inexpedient to act upon them at that time. He also re-submitted the report, and it was again tabled.⁸ It was never considered.

The conservatism of Methodist leaders is also apparent in their attitude towards missionary work among the slaves. Under the able leadership of Dr. William Capers, these missionaries continued their unselfish service. In order to secure the fullest co-operation of masters, preachers began to hold their meetings on each plantation.⁹ The need of co-operation was fully recognized by a conference in the South to consider the missionary work among negroes. It was

believed that southern ministers could most successfully carry on the work on the plantations.¹⁰ *The Christian Advocate and Journal* published many reports of revivals among slaves, and of the better moral conditions among the colored people of the South. The Ohio¹¹ and Tennessee¹² conferences gave their enthusiastic approval. Indeed, so effective was this missionary endeavor that Judge Cranch of Washington, D. C. declared that negroes of the Methodist Church were "seldom or never brought before the criminal courts for misconduct."¹³ So successful was the missionary enterprise that Bishop Andrew wrote: "I would only say, in reference to the great work before us, we greatly need more men and more money."¹⁴

In the preceding chapter it was shown that, prior to 1831, the Colonization Society had the approval of the Methodist Church. Until abolitionists became very powerful, this organization continued to receive Methodist support. In 1832 a mission was established in Liberia by action of the General Conference and representatives of the Society were commended to Methodist ministers and people.¹⁵ At the annual meeting of the American Colonization Society, held in January, 1833, the Rev. William Hammet declared that the General Conference action was unanimous, and that the Methodist Church with almost six hundred thousand members and nearly ten thousand ministers, approved the Society's purpose.¹⁶ Annual conferences adopted resolutions, pledging their support to the colonizationists.¹⁷ The resolution of the Kentucky conference, "That we continue to repose entire confidence in the rectitude, policy, and operations of the American Colonization Society, and that we commend it to all who are likely to regard our opinions as in any way worthy their approval and patronage,"¹⁸ is typical of those adopted by other conferences.

Methodist publications also supported the Colonization Society. By one writer it was endorsed because it pointed "the path to peace in America, and regeneration to Africa."¹⁹ The editor of the *Christian Sentinel*, the official publication of Virginia conference, appealed to his readers to encourage plans for colonizing negroes in Africa.²⁰ The *Christian Advocate and Journal* published letters from Liberia; reports from local and state colonization societies;²¹ and memorials

and addresses of the Society.²² In one of these it was set forth that the negro was desired in neither South nor North, and that the only practicable plan was to rid the country of the presence of the negro.²³ In 1834, the editor, in behalf of the Colonization Society, requested all Methodist ministers to speak relative to the work of the Society on July 4 and take a collection for the same.²⁴

The conservatism of the Methodist Episcopal Church was especially pronounced in its relation to abolitionists and anti-slavery societies. Garrison's announcement that he would be heard, proved to be no idle threat. Every failure of churches to show themselves opposed to slavery was held up to abolition scorn, and the Methodist Church undoubtedly furnished its full quota of copy. One anonymous writer, "Onesimus,"²⁵ declared that not a single person had ever been arraigned by any Methodist conference and expelled because of his connection with slavery.²⁶ Methodist papers were said to be as "still as midnight and as silent as death," except those which openly apologized for slaveholding. He further asserted that those members who refused to obey Church officers would not be tolerated, but that so long as a man rendered unquestioning obedience to his ecclesiastical superiors, he could do as he pleased in regard to slavery.²⁷ This attack was immediately challenged, and Garrison apologized to the extent of saying that "the Methodists here, so far as we know, are as favorable to the Abolition cause as any other denomination,"²⁸ but the history of the anti-slavery movement in the Methodist Church for the succeeding thirty years proves beyond cavil that there was enough truth in the accusation to merit the censure which was heaped upon the time-servers in the Church.

May 18, 1833, Garrison called upon all churches immediately to exclude slaveholders of every rank from their organizations.²⁹ In reply, one defender of Methodism, "B. K. Jun.," asserted that his Church would become abolitionist as fast as members and clergy received light. But "Onesimus" declared that Methodists did not desire light, and did not use what light the Discipline afforded. He also affirmed that the effectiveness of the Discipline on the question of slavery had been practically destroyed.³⁰ A week later, he boldly charged

that the reason for the conservatism of the Church and especially of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* was that an uncompromising stand against slavery would cost that paper 12,000 of its 30,000 subscribers in a single month and entail an annual loss of \$25,000.³¹ This attack called forth a protest from La Roy Sunderland,³² but that the Church was not abolitionist seems fully established by the fact that A. J. N. Danforth was refused permission to speak on the slavery question before a Methodist conference held at Boston. Only two members of this conference voted to hear him. Further, although both editor and business agent of *Zion's Herald* were personally opposed to slavery, they refused to carry the statements of Garrison and other abolitionists in their columns because the paper was owned by the Boston Wesleyan Association, which presumably was not abolitionist.³³

Throughout the period to 1836, most of the conferences were opposed to abolitionists. New York conference regretted the radical propaganda because of the evil effects on negroes in Africa and the United States, and because they anticipated only the "most unfavorable results from such operations to the progress of Christian principles."³⁴ The Ohio conference of 1835 deprecated the excitement caused in slave states by abolitionism and disclaimed "all connection and co-operation with, or belief in the same." The "junior preachers, local brethren, and private members" within the bounds of the conference were urged to abstain from all participation in the work of anti-slavery societies. They further affirmed that northern ministers and citizens who opposed the anti-slavery crusade "with firmness and moderation" were the real friends of the Church, the slaves of the South, and the Constitution of the Nation. They were especially antagonistic to foreign abolition lecturers, and to all publications which had for their purpose the immediate abolition of slavery, and to encourage such radicalism was considered "injurious to Christian fellowship, dangerous to our civil institutions, unfavorable to the privileges and spiritual interests of the slaves, and unbecoming any Christian, patriot, or philanthropist, and especially any Methodist."³⁵ Only four votes were cast against the resolutions and these were for other reasons than that the members

avored abolitionists. Summing up the situation in the Ohio conference, the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* declared his belief that the conference was unanimous on the following propositions: "Slavery is an evil. 2. It ought to be abolished in a gradual, constitutional manner. 3. The remedy proposed by 'abolitionists' is worse than the evil itself."³⁶

The Kentucky conference of 1835 condemned the activities of abolitionists as "an abuse of the rights of citizenship." They discountenanced the propaganda of foreign lecturers and favored arresting "at once the mischievous tendency of their seditious intermeddling and officious insolence." They further suggested that it was dangerous to accept the leadership of those "whose measures and movements tend directly to subvert the Constitution and dissolve the Government."³⁷ In the same year, the Tennessee³⁸ and Holston³⁹ conferences approved the sentiments of the Ohio and Kentucky conferences, while the South Carolina conference declared that the principles of abolitionists were "utterly erroneous and altogether hurtful."⁴⁰ Even the Maine conference adopted resolutions, pledging themselves to prudent measures for the eradication of slavery.⁴¹

Not only conferences but also Church papers were conservative. While the *Christian Advocate and Journal* printed an account of a slave uprising in Virginia,⁴² there was no suggestion of sympathy for the lot of the slaves, but only the statement that "prompt and efficient measures had been taken to quell the insurrection."⁴³ In the North, mobs attempted to break up anti-slavery meetings. In New York, four African churches were raided by mobs in 1834,⁴⁴ while in Philadelphia, some boys were responsible for a riot in which twenty negro dwellings were stripped of their contents and several people killed.⁴⁵ The editor of the *Advocate* discountenanced both anti-slavery meetings and riots. He declared that ministers should keep aloof from all such agitation, for the salvation of souls was "their only business, and should engage all their time."⁴⁶

The *Christian Advocate and Journal* condemned abolitionists unsparingly. In an article entitled "Abolitionists no Friends to Slaves" it was declared that the Anti-slavery So-

ciety deserved "the reprobation of every sober friend either of the whites or blacks."⁴⁷ That abolitionists were extremely radical is undoubtedly true. All southerners who held slaves were declared to be pirates in name and character, while slave states were "Sodom" and "every kitchen a brothel." The New York editor declared that abolitionists desired political and social equality between the black and white races.⁴⁸ He assured the South that the anti-slavery party in New York was an almost negligible factor and would soon disappear.⁴⁹ In another article, he said he was opposed to slavery but also against the imprudent methods advocated by abolitionists. The national government could free only those slaves in the District of Columbia. Since slaveholding was a question with which the states must deal, he advised philanthropists to send their lecturers into the South.⁵⁰ He considered the anti-slavery propaganda as "at variance with the vested interests and constitutional rights and obligations of the country." Since he feared that the question might be forced upon Congress and bitterness result, he urged that all churches be extremely conservative, and, as organizations, keep free from politics.⁵¹

The *Western Christian Advocate* was likewise conservative. The editor declared that he was opposed to slavery but that he had "quite as little fellowship with the few persons who have espoused the violent project of immediate abolition."⁵² He affirmed his interest in colonization, and assured his readers that he would "rejoice in abolition, when it comes about according to the established constitutions of the country, and the conventional and vested rights of its citizens."⁵² The third official Methodist publication was the *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review*. Garrison affirmed that this magazine was also opposed to abolitionists, and cited in proof the statement of a contributor to the *Review* that "if a colored man were admitted to an association to which he belonged, he would withdraw."⁵³ Reference to this magazine confirms the opinion of Garrison that the publication was not anti-slavery.⁵⁴

Outside the bounds of New England, the *Virginia Sentinel* was the only Methodist publication which printed anything which had the abolition of slavery as its objective.⁵⁵ The

editor declared that he had always been "mentally and practically opposed to involuntary slavery." He favored freedom of speech, and asserted that he, and everyone else, had the right to think as he pleased on the subject of slavery. But he deprecated the interference of Christians in the political affairs of the country for the purpose of freeing slaves. He considered that "designing and interested individuals" were "striving to produce confusion, hatred, and deep animosity between different sections of the country." In his opinion, the question was one which should be handled with "extreme delicacy," and by the political powers only.⁵⁶ The editorial closed with a strong appeal in behalf of the Colonization Society.

As long as abolitionism had not secured a foothold among ministers of the Methodist Church, the excitement resulting from Garrison's propaganda could be viewed with comparative equanimity. But discussion of this exciting subject could not long be avoided. By at least one writer, it was held that "Father Bonney" should be credited with starting the anti-slavery movement in New England conferences by writing several articles for the *New England Christian Herald*.⁵⁷ Whether or not they are to be credited to him, several articles did appear in this paper in 1830 and 1831. In one account, the ill-treatment of slaves and the anti-slavery work of Methodists in Jamaica was set forth.⁵⁸ When F. Todd won one thousand dollars in a damage suit against Garrison, it was shown that the North Carolina Manumission Society had defended the abolitionist.⁵⁹ Later, other articles appeared which unsparingly condemned slaveholding.⁶⁰

Bonney may have been the originator of the New England anti-slavery movement in the Methodist Church but he utterly failed to stir the Church against slavery. It remained for Orange Scott⁶¹ to do for the Methodist Episcopal Church what Garrison had already done for the Nation. For, with Scott's entrance into the struggle in behalf of the slaves, it was impossible for the Church to ignore the slavery issue. Scott was unquestionably the most powerful of Methodist abolitionists.⁶² Previous to 1833 he does not seem to have even thought about slavery. But at that time, when he was thirty-three years of age, his attention was first called to the

objectives of abolitionists. He immediately began to inform himself on the abolition side of the controversy, *The Liberator* being his chief text. For almost a year he meditated as to his future course, then as presiding elder of Providence District he began to address camp-meetings and other assemblies on his new theme. At the invitation of D. H. Ela, publisher of *Zion's Herald*, he began a series of articles in that paper against slavery. So influential was Scott that, at the New England conference of 1834, he was able to have tabled a motion in favor of the Colonization Society.⁶³

Thus far, Scott had worked alone and achieved marked success. Now he conceived the idea of a movement which had for its purpose nothing less than the destruction of slaveholding in the Methodist Episcopal Church! Scott himself tells how he started this crusade: "At that time I subscribed for one hundred copies of the *Liberator* for three months, to be directed to one hundred preachers of the N. E. Conference."⁶⁴ The result was as I anticipated. Before the three months expired a majority of the N. E. Conference (150 members in all,) was converted to Abolitionism."⁶⁵ Scott's propaganda bore fruit at the New England conference, which convened at Lynn, Massachusetts in June, 1835. An anti-slavery society was formed, which had for its object the "immediate and unconditional abolition of slavery." Undoubtedly, the fact that George Thompson addressed the ministers added to their zeal and courage. So powerful was the anti-slavery faction that an attempt to censure the course of *Zion's Herald*, which had printed Scott's articles, was defeated. And the crowning achievement of abolitionists at this session of the conference was the defeat of all conservative candidates, with the exception of Wilbur Fisk, in the election of delegates to represent them at the General Conference of 1836.⁶⁵

The abolitionists were checked in their triumphant progress at only one point. Anti-slavery resolutions were introduced on Saturday and consideration of them deferred until Monday. While the debate was in progress, a memorial from New Bedford, signed by many laymen and deprecating the discussion of slavery by preachers, was read and laid on the table. Then the bishops, Hedding and Emory, who were

present, lectured the ministers on the errors of abolitionism. On the closing day of the conference, the preachers formally apologized to the bishops for their radical action.⁶⁵ The preachers had yielded to their superiors but a beginning had been made. The anti-slavery tendency of this conference was hailed with delight by Garrison who exclaimed: "The primitive spirit of Methodism is beginning to revive with all its holy zeal and courage, and it will not falter until the Methodist Churches are purged of slavery, and the last slave in the land stands forth a redeemed and regenerated being."⁶⁵ In the same year, New Hampshire conference proposed strong resolutions against slavery but Bishop Hedding refused to put them to a vote.⁶⁶

Soon after the adjournment of these conferences, Hedding and Emory prepared an address to New England ministers.⁶⁷ In this document they unqualifiedly condemned the agitation which had been carried on in the two conferences as inimical to the highest interests of the Church, and particularly of the colored people of the South. It was asserted that a "deep political game" was "involved in the present agitation of this question," and ministers were urged to keep themselves clear of the controversy. In order to make doubly sure that ministers did not engage in anti-slavery discussions, it was suggested that presiding elders and laymen discountenance all attempts of ministers to speak on this subject.⁶⁸ It is to be noted that neither bishop was personally favorable to slavery but simply followed the precedent established by Asbury who was interested first of all in the spiritual life of negroes.⁶⁹

These two bishops were not alone in their desire to check the abolition movement in the Church. Dr. Wilbur Fisk, who refused, in October, 1835, to sign a petition for the abolition of slavery in the District of Columbia,⁷⁰ was likewise for moderation. He feared the ultimate results of the abolition movement if it were permitted to continue unchecked. He declared that the tendency of the movement was towards the dismemberment of both Church and Nation.⁷¹ As might be expected, there were replies to the bishops⁷² and to Fisk, who, with Professor Whedon, was accused of catering to slaveholders. Fisk was president of

Wesleyan University and was advised to move the college if he expected to strengthen the institution by aligning himself with the pro-slavery element.⁷³

The immediate result of the abolition struggle in New England conferences was the concentration of Methodism's conservative forces against refractory ministers who set at defiance the wishes and commands of Church officers. The cause for the defection is unknown, but the management of *Zion's Herald* decided not to print the arguments of ultra-abolitionists. That the latter might have a medium for the dissemination of anti-slavery doctrines, *Zion's Watchman* was established at New York, and the first copy issued, January 1, 1836. The founding of this new abolition paper by La Roy Sunderland and George Storrs was commended by Garrison who declared that official Methodist papers possessed excessive power.⁷⁴

Various conferences outside of New England set themselves resolutely against these disturbers of the Church's peace. New York conference regretted the work of abolitionists since they believed the best interests of the negro, slave or freedman, were injured rather than helped by their propaganda.⁷⁵ Ohio conference resolved: "That as friends of peaceable, gradual emancipation, we have no cause to regret the course which has been pursued by the Methodist Episcopal Church on the subject of slavery, as set forth in the Discipline, but retain undiminished confidence in the same."⁷⁶ And the conferences, to whose resolutions reference has already been made,⁷⁷ were emphatic in their demands that ministers and laymen should refrain from any connection with radicalism. The support of the bishops and Dr. Fisk, as well as all measures against anti-slavery ministers, is incontrovertibly proved by the final resolution of Tennessee conference that they approved "of the course pursued by the Maine, Ohio, and Kentucky conferences, and also the efforts of Dr. Fisk in opposition to abolitionism, and especially of the letter recently addressed by Bishops Hedding and Emory to the New England and New Hampshire conferences."⁷⁸

Opposition to abolitionism was reflected in the official *Christian Advocate and Journal*. When a group of aboli-

tionists, of whom La Roy Sunderland was one, signed an address in which they said: "We shall show you that the Christian Advocate and Journal, the official organ of this Church, apologizes for the crimes of the enslaver of human species, and attempts to justify the system," the editor denied the accusation and said that he recognized the disease but objected to the medicine prescribed by abolitionists. He asserted that he was carrying out the will of New York conference and the General Conference,⁷⁹ and assured his readers that those who espoused the cause of immediate abolition of slavery set themselves in opposition to the wishes of the General Conference.⁸⁰

Another result of abolition excitement in New England, showing the conservatism of the Church, was the tendency of southern Methodists to sustain the pro-slavery party in their opposition to northern radicals. As a direct result of the New England controversy, the Rev. Mr. Postell, a Methodist preacher, in an address to slaveholders of South Carolina, advised: "Shun abolition as you would the DEVIL. Do your duty as citizens and Christians; and in heaven you will be rewarded, and delivered from abolitionism."⁸¹ In 1835, when the Post Office at Charleston was sacked and all anti-slavery papers in it destroyed, a public meeting was called, at which all ministers were present to show their approval of the act.⁸² At Jackson, Mississippi, copies of the *Emancipator* were withheld by the postmaster because they were addressed to "The Methodist Clergymen" of the state. The editor of a local paper affirmed that it was inconceivable that Methodist ministers would countenance abolition propaganda but declared that some "lazy scoundrels" did. He expressed the hope that all such might be caught and lynched.⁸³

A further result of the agitation for immediate abolition of slavery was the attempt of apologists for slavery to prove that the Church should not seek to destroy slavery. Two arguments were used: (1) That the abolition of slavery was a political question and not a religious one: therefore, the Church should not concern itself therewith; (2) that slavery was justified by the Scriptures. In regard to the first contention, South Carolina conference held that only when a slave was abused was the Church to interfere, and

then, not because the negro was held in slavery, but only because of ill-treatment. The conference was equally certain that the Scriptures authorized the holding of slaves.⁸⁴ At the request of the conference, a statement written by the Rev. Samuel Dunwody, one of their number, was published, in which he asserted the principle of slavery was justified by the Decalogue.⁸⁵

During the period from 1831 to 1836, bishops, conferences and ministers were studiously conservative. Towards the work among the slaves they maintained a very cordial interest; while the Colonization Society received their heartiest commendation. When Garrison began his attacks on slavery, and incidentally on the churches, all the power of Methodism was mustered in opposition. So long as the movement was outside the Church, the peace of the organization was not a question of great concern; but when Scott attacked slavery in the Church, peace was impossible until either the pro-slavery or the abolition forces were driven from the Methodist fold. For the present, the conservative group controlled the counsels of the Church. From 1832 to 1836 there was not a single decision given in favor of abolitionists, while no decision was rendered without the sanction of the pro-slavery party. The Church's unwillingness to accede to demands of abolitionists caused the storm to rage still more fiercely. Ministers left their regular work to lecture against slavery;⁸⁶ reason fled; and bitter anathemas were many times substituted for logic and fact.

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1. Hart, *Slavery and Abolition*, pp. 152-69. Writers disagree on the question as to who should have the credit for starting the anti-slavery movement. Hart believes that Lundy was the great leader, while Henry Ward Beecher considered John Rankin the real leader of the movement (See Birney, James G. Birney and his Times, pp. 168-9). If the choice is to be made between these two men, the former should be selected since his *Genius of Universal Emancipation* antedates the reform work of Rankin, begun in 1827, by six years. Relative to an opinion commonly held at the time that "abolitionism dates with Arthur Tappan and William Lloyd Garrison," Weston says: "There is not an intelligent man born in America, who has reached or past middle life, who does not know that there is not one particle of truth in any of these statements, or the least color, or pretense of color, for them" (Weston, *Progress of Slavery in the United States*, p. 176). He says that the Quakers should have the honor since in 1754 they issued a statement against slavery and gave as their reason "that custom and familiarity with evil of any kind have a tendency to bias the judgment and deprave the mind" (*Ibid.*, p. 189).
 2. Hart, *Slavery and Abolitionism*, pp. 165-6, 173.
 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-80.

4. Hedding was from New England. He said: "Don't that make your Yankee blood boil?"
 5. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, pp. 399-400.
 6. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 367 (1832).
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 513.
 9. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume IV., p. 14, col. 3; September 25, 1829. The information is contained in a letter from Dr. Capers, dated September 7, 1829.
 10. *Ibid.*, Volume VIII., p. 62, col. 3; December 13, 1833. Dr. Capers presided at this missionary meeting.
 11. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume II., pp. 77-8; September 11, 1835.
 12. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 131.
 13. Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States*, p. 121.
 14. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VII., p. 142, col. 3; May 3, 1833. It is significant that Capers felt constrained to disclaim any connection between southern negro missions and either the anti-slavery societies or the Colonization Society. (*Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VIII., p. 190, col. 5; July 25, 1834) Capers was probably not opposed to colonization but only trying to allay suspicion.
- As to the nature of the instructions imparted to slaves, the South Carolina conference furnishes a complete answer. Said these ministers: "Our missionaries inculcate the duties of servants to their masters as we find those duties in the Scriptures. They inculcate the performance of them as indispensibly important. We hold that a Christian slave must be submissive, faithful, and obedient, for reasons of the same authority with those which oblige husbands, wives, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, to fulfill the duties of these relations. We would employ no one in the work who might hesitate to teach thus, nor can such a one be found in the whole number of the preachers of this Conference" (Shipp, *The History of Methodism in South Carolina*, pp.497-8.)
15. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VI., p. 159, col. 4; June 1, 1832.
 16. *Ibid.*, Volume VII., p. 105, col. 6; March 1, 1823. The speaker declared that "All the other leading denominations of the country, sir, do the same."
 17. I have examined the reports of the following conferences: New York (*Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VIII., p. 155, col. 2; May 23, 1834); New Jersey (*Ibid.*, Volume XI., p. 164, col. 4; June 2, 1837); Ohio (*Western Christian Advocate*, Volume II., pp. 77-8; September 11, 1835); Kentucky—Year, 1832 (*Redford, Western Cavaliers*, pp. 71-2).
 18. *Redford, Cavaliers*, pp. 148-9 (1835). That there was some opposition to the Colonization Society on the part of southerners is apparent from the following statement: "There is a general aversion, on the part of the colored people of this state (Maryland), both bound and free, to the plan of colonization in Africa. This dislike Mr. A. attributes principally to the publications of the Anti-Slavery Society, which are extensively circulated here among the free blacks. He even regrets that the Methodist Church has given its sanction to the plan of the Colonization Society, since it prejudices the colored people against its members and teachers. The Methodist church, in this state, includes a great number of colored members, among whom are many slaves." (Andrews, *Slavery and the Domestic Slave-Trade in the United States*, pp. 36-7). The statement was made in 1835.
 19. *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review*, Volume XVII., p. 137. The statement is contained in the "Third Annual Report of the New York Colonization Society."
 20. *Christian Sentinel*, Volume II., p. 94, cols. 4-5; November 15, 1833.
 21. See especially the issues of this paper for the months of January, February and March, 1836.
 22. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume V., p. 165, col. 1; June 17, 1831; Volume VI., p. 123, col. 2; March 30, 1832; Volume VII., p. 189, cols. 2-6; July 26, 1833; and Volume VIII., p. 70, col. 5; December 27, 1833.

23. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VI., p. 97, col. 5; February 17, 1832. The statement is as follows: "According to the last census, there were no fewer than 339,360 free blacks within the limits of the United States. Their numbers are constantly increasing, in a formidable ratio. At the south they are looked upon with suspicion, and almost with abhorrence. At the north they are regarded as an inferior caste, and consequently deprived of every incentive to virtuous action. Wealth cannot bring them within the sphere of social intercourse; nor merit (however great or justly earned,) elevate them to the privileges and association of white men."
24. *Ibid.*, Volume VIII., p. 179, col. 5; July 4, 1834.
25. See the Biblical epistle to Philemon.
26. I believe this statement is untrue. Cf. Chapter I.
27. *The Liberator*, Volume III., p. 69, cols. 2-3; May 4, 1833. His charge is that "while a Methodist member would not be tolerated one day, who dared to think differently from the heads of the craft; a man who will call certain persons, Rabbi, and obsequiously admit and accomplish all that he is ordered to execute, can kidnap as long as he lists, and be esteemed in exact proportion to the atrocity of his wickedness, and the accumulation of his plunder."
28. *Ibid.*, p. 75, cols. 2-3; May 11, 1833. We may be sure that this was not intended as a compliment to the Methodist Church.
29. *The Liberator*, Volume III., p. 78, col. 4; May 18, 1833.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 82, col. 3; May 25, 1833.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 85, cols. 1-2; June 1, 1833. "I asked one of the Methodist brethren very recently what was the reason that their *New York Advocate and Journal* which weekly distributes 30,000 sheets, never even hinted at the question of slavery; especially as their own so highly eulogized discipline declares that every slaveholder is in 'the gall of bitterness and the bonds of iniquity?' My friend replied, 'they are afraid, they dare not—a good conscience and faithfulness to duty would cost too much.' One such paper of sound doctrine, such as this *Firebrand* No. III., which I shewed him, would lop off 12,000 subscribers in one month."
- "This reminded me of the time-serving politician who always shifted with the course of events; alleging, that a good conscience was too valuable an article for him; he could not afford to possess such a jewel. It seems that the editors of the *Advocate* are of the same opinion. What! denounce man-stealing, when they should lose the fingering of \$25,000 per annum? No, no. Brother Capers may drive his slaves until they *caper!* and brother Watson may kidnap men's wives, and sell them as often as he chooses; and brother Rives may exchange women for sheep!—and but we forbear the dire detail. Philanthropists, however, these editorial Doctors can calumniate, and the friends of humanity are reviled with applause; but no *Methodist Advocate*, no *Quarterly Review*, no *Zion's Herald* BANGS away at the felonious confederacy of man-stealers, which constitute the Methodist Episcopal Church, south of the Pennsylvania line and the Ohio. No, no! 'IT WOULD COST TOO MUCH.'"
32. *Ibid.*, p. 96, cols. 4-5; June 15, 1833. Sunderland later seceded from the Methodist Church because it was not abolitionist.
33. *The Liberator*, Volume III., p. 155, col. 5; September 28, 1833.
34. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VIII., p. 155, col. 2; May 23, 1834.
35. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume II., p. 77, cols. 1-3; September 11, 1835.
36. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume II., p. 77, cols. 1-3; September 11, 1835.
37. *Redford*, *Western Cavaliers*, pp. 148-9. Cf. *Redford*, *Life and Times of Bishop Cavanaugh*, pp. 171-2 and Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 130. Another source—Parker, *Autobiography*, pp. 155-6—gives some corroborative material. Parker says: "On another occasion in Augusta, Ky. the seat of a Methodist college; where I had been delivering a temperance lecture; a number of young men, students from the south, were standing in the street. One of them observed that John Rankin ought to have his throat cut." Rankin was accused of helping negroes to escape to Canada.
38. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 131. This conference condemned the course of the abolitionists as "fraught with danger to the peace,

- union, and very existence of this republic, unsustained by Scripture, and at variance, both with the letter and spirit of the Gospel."
39. *The Liberator*, Volume VI., p. 5, col. 2; January 9, 1836.
 40. Shipp, *The History of Methodism in South Carolina*, pp. 497-8. The second resolution read: "We denounce the principles and opinions of the abolitionists *in toto*, and do solemnly declare our conviction and belief that, whether they originated as some business men have thought, as a money speculation, or as some politicians think, for party electioneering purposes, or, as we are inclined to believe in a false philosophy, overreaching or setting aside the Scriptures through a vain conceit of a higher moral refinement, they are utterly erroneous and altogether hurtful." This was in 1836.
 41. Allen and Pillsbury, *Methodism in Maine*, p. 105. The resolutions are given in full.
 42. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VI., p. 15, cols. 4-5; September 23, 1831. See also, *Ibid.*, p. 3, col. 3; September 2, 1831 and *Ibid.*, p. 7, col. 4; September 9, 1831.
 43. *Ibid.*, p. 3, col. 3; September 2, 1831.
 44. *Ibid.*, Volume VIII., p. 187, col. 2; July 18, 1834.
 45. *Ibid.*, p. 207, col. 2; August 22, 1834. For a similar occurrence see *Ibid.*, Volume IX., p. 7, col. 5; September 5, 1834.
 46. *Ibid.*, Volume VIII., p. 27, cols. 1-2; October 11, 1833.
 47. *Ibid.*, p. 190, col. 5; July 25, 1834.
 48. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, p. 154, col. 6; May 23, 1834. His statement follows: "Such is the spirit and temper of men who claim to be philanthropists, and who urge immediate abolition, and perfect equality, political and social as well as moral, and as a specimen of their practical designs, not only insist that the children of our black population shall be educated in the same schools with our own, but invited the 'colored ladies and gentlemen,' to be seated promiscuously on the platform and through the house, without distinction of color, an invitation which was accepted by hundreds of them and has been since followed up at their other public meetings."
 49. "They may be assured that the anti-slavery party here is so small in number, and so inconsiderable in influence, that their glory is at an end, their downfall certain." (*Ibid.*)
 50. *Ibid.*, p. 202, cols. 4-5; August 15, 1834. Commenting on the coming of George Thompson, an ardent English lecturer on slavery, the editor said: "If he has a special mission to masters and slaves, why not go to the country where slavery exists, and try the strength of his arguments there instead of lending his force among a community where reciprocal rights of freemen are respected. The physician is needed only in the chamber of the sick, and not at the firesides of the healthy." (*Ibid.*, Volume IX., p. 116, col. 6; March 13, 1835) D. M. Reese said Thompson purposed to "split the great Methodist prop by which the slavery of this country is supported." (*Ibid.*) Because the *Christian Advocate and Journal* was so ultra conservative, Garrison declared that it was "mainly under the influence of so vindictive, selfish and loathsome a creature as David M. Reese." The *Advocate* was considered deaf, blind and dumb to the cries of the slaves, and was condemned for refusing to print anti-slavery material sent in to it. (*The Liberator*, Volume VI., p. 11, col. 3; January 16, 1836).
 51. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume VIII., p. 27, col. 1; October 11, 1833. "The Church, as a body, should not be political in any sense, nor on any question."
 52. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume I., p. 18, col. 5; May 30, 1834.
 53. *The Liberator*, Volume III., p. 71 col. 4; May 4, 1833.
 54. *Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review*, Volume XVII—New Series, Volume VI (1835), p. 136. "You would convince the south, while the south is one mass of adamant, against every syllable you send upon her, and every movement you make but confirms the solidity. Your main success is in defeating yourselves; your advance is—backward; and when the bonds of the slave shall be finally broken, it will be not in consequence, but in spite of your sadly mistaken efforts."
 55. *Christian Sentinel*, Volume I., p. 71, col. 3; October 5, 1832. The article referred to was quoted from the *Staunton Spectator* and reads as follows: "Memorials in favor of abolition, and in the event that the Legislature will not pass a general law on the sub-

- ject, praying for the passage of an act prohibiting any slave from being brought into Western Virginia after the first day of June next, and providing for the gradual abolition of slavery in this portion of the State, are printed at this office for gratuitous distribution. All persons friendly to the cause are respectfully invited to call or send for copies and aid in procuring signatures."
56. Christian Sentinel, Volume II., p. 94, cols. 4-5; November, 15, 1833.
 57. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 173, col. 6; October 31, 1855.
 58. New England Christian Herald, Volume II., p. 32, col. 1; November 24, 1830. Cf. Ibid., p. 44, cols. 2-3; December 15, 1830.
 59. Ibid., p. 62, col. 4; January 19, 1831.
 60. Ibid., p. 177, col. 1; August 10, 1831. Cf. Ibid., p. 150, col. 3; June 22, 1831 and p. 154, cols. 3-4; June 29, 1831.
 61. Scott died in 1847.
 62. Matlack, The Life of Orange Scott, pp. 31-5 and 70-71.
 63. Matlack, The Life of Orange Scott, pp. 31-5. Cf. Crawford, Centennial of New England Methodism, pp. 209-10; Mudge, The History of the New England Conferences, p. 279. Of the last two, the latter is the better history.
 64. "N.E." means the New England conference.
 65. Crawford, The Centennial of New England Methodism, p. 210.
 66. This controversy resulted in a struggle over "conference rights" and was one of the milestones in the growth of democracy in the Methodist Episcopal Church.
 67. This address was chiefly the work of Bishop Emory.
 68. Emory, The Life of Bishop Emory, pp. 279-84. Concerning the radicalism of New England conferences he wrote a member of Genesee conference, September 11, 1835: "The ultraism of immediate abolitionism has given us much trouble in two of the conferences, and but two. I am persuaded it has done immense injury to the cause of the blacks themselves." (Ibid., p. 278).
 69. Ibid., p. 257. Bishop Emory, while in East Tennessee in 1832, saw droves of negroes being taken to the West. He wrote one of his sons: "The principal droves on this road are negroes, whom their despicable drivers are driving westward. There is now before my eyes a drove of about a hundred. The current of *movers* westward, on this road, is also very great; and there are generally with them five or six blacks to one white. So this root of evil is planted and transplanted, and what will the end be?"
 70. Crawford, The Centennial of New England Methodism, p. 211.
 71. Holdich, The Life of Wilbur Fisk, p. 326. Cf. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 126-7. Fisk's statement, as a forecast, is interesting and valuable. Said he, writing in 1835: "I think its ultimate tendency, nay, the aim of some of the leaders of this business, is the dismemberment of the political union and of the Methodist Episcopal Church What other result can possibly follow, if all the North gets excited in opposition to the South?"
 72. Crawford, The Centennial of New England Methodism, p. 210.
 73. The Liberator, Volume V., p. 62, cols. 5-6; April 18, 1835.
 74. Ibid., Volume VI., p. 11, col. 3; January 16, 1836. Cf. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 137.
 75. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume VIII., p. 179, col. 5; July 4, 1834.
 76. Western Christian Advocate, Volume II., pp. 77-8; September 11, 1835. The report was introduced by a committee of which T. A. Morris and L. L. Hamline, both of whom were later chosen as bishops of the Church, were members.
 77. Supra, pp. 43-4.
 78. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 131.
 79. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume IX., p. 102, col. 3; February 27, 1835.
 80. Ibid., p. 182, col. 4; July 10., 1835. This policy was in accord with the statement issued over a year previously that the paper "is and must be conducted on the positive principles established by the General Conference, and is essential to our peace and unity as a Church." (Ibid., Volume VIII., p. 106, col. 6; March 3, 1834.)
 81. Jay, Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery, p. 412.
 82. Ibid., p. 476. The Charleston Courier reported that "the clergy of all denominations attended in a body lending *their sanction* to

the proceedings, and adding by their presence to the impressive character of the scene." The meeting declared that the "thanks of this meeting are due to the reverend gentlemen of the clergy in this city who have so promptly and so effectually responded to the public sentiment, by suspending their schools, in which the *free colored population* were taught; and that this meeting deem it a patriotic action, worthy of all praise and proper to be imitated by the teachers of similar schools throughout the South."

83. The Liberator, Volume V., p. 157, col. 1; October 3, 1835.

84. Shipp, The History of Methodism in South Carolina, pp. 497-8. The resolutions bearing on this topic are as follows: "1. We regard the question of abolition of slavery as a *civil one*, belonging to the State, and not at all a *religious one*, or appropriate to the Church. Though we do hold that abuses, which may sometimes happen, such as excessive labor, extreme punishment, withholding food and clothing, neglect in sickness or old age and the like, are immoralities to be prevented or punished by all possible means, both of Church discipline and the civil law—each in its sphere."

"3. We consider and believe that the Holy Scriptures, so far from giving countenance to this delusion (abolitionism), do unequivocally authorize the relation of master and slave: (1) By holding masters and their slaves alike as believers, brethren, and beloved; (2) by enjoining on each the duties proper toward the other; (3) by grounding their obligations for the fulfillment of their duties, as of all others, on their relation to God. Masters could never have had their duties enforced by the consideration, '*Your MASTER also is in heaven*,' if barely being a master involved in itself anything immoral." The Scripture upon which the conference based their argument is the sixth chapter of Ephesians. It unquestionably authorizes slavery.

It is evident that the sentiments expressed by members of South Carolina conference were identical with those proclaimed by five southern legislatures which adopted resolutions calling upon northern states to "crush the traitorous designs of the abolitionists." The five states were South Carolina, North Carolina, Virginia, Georgia and Alabama. (Elliot, The Great Secession, cols. 154-5.)

85. Matlack, History of American Slavery and Methodism, p. 88. In part, Dunwoody said: "I am not an advocate for slavery, and with my present views, I never will be, while I draw the breath of life. But this I confess, *that I am an advocate for those genuine Gospel doctrines, in which the principle of slavery is JUSTIFIED in a variety of instances!* ! !

"Another error, into which the anti-slaveholders have fallen is the confounding slavery as it exists in the Church, with slavery as it exists in the State; whereas, there is a wide difference between them. *What may be moral evil in the State, may not be moral evil in the Church, because they are placed in different circumstances.*

"The Scriptures already quoted, and a variety of others that might be quoted, all combine to prove that the PRINCIPLE of *slavery* has been recognized by the appointment of God under the Old Testament dispensation. But another argument of considerable strength, to show that *God himself has SANCTIONED THE PRINCIPLE of slavery*, may be found in the moral law itself. In the tenth commandment it is expressly declared, that the Israelites were possessed of servants, and their right to hold such property was recognized even by the moral law itself, which is acknowledged by all Christians to be of perpetual obligation, even down to the end of the world."

86. Cartwright (Autobiography, p. 364) says: "Prior to the General Conference of 1836, the run-mad spirit of rabid abolitionism had broken out in some of the eastern and northern conferences; and Methodist preachers were found by the dozen to quit their appropriate fields of labor, and their holy calling of saving souls, and turn out, and become hired lecturers against slavery. So zealous were they, that they forgot their pastoral duties; and they went so far as violently to oppose colonization as a slaveholding trick." Fisk opposed and vanquished them "seeing that this rabid abolitionism would rivet the chains of slavery the tighter, rouse the jealousies of the slaveholders, and disrupt the Methodist Church."

It may be noted that some of this radical material was a reprint of Wesley's "Thoughts on Slavery" (The Wesleyan Extra, Volume I., No. 1—found at the Evanston, Illinois, Public Library); and some anti-slavery resolutions from Windsor, Maine, favoring prayers for the enslaved (The Liberator, Volume VI., p. 66, col. 5; April 23, 1836).

CHAPTER V

THE TROUBLES OF METHODISM

The first real test of strength between Methodist abolitionists and their opponents came at the General Conference of 1836. In 1832, Garrison had had little or no influence upon the General Conference proceedings. But five years of agitation and the enlistment of a few leading Methodist ministers in the cause of human freedom made it inevitable that slavery would be the most exciting topic considered by the quadrennial conference.

Cincinnati, the seat of the Conference, was in perfect accord with the spirit of Methodism. The city was so friendly towards the southern viewpoint and so opposed to abolitionism that James G. Birney was compelled to deliver an anti-slavery lecture in a Presbyterian church at Fulton, a suburb of Cincinnati.¹ Later, his life was threatened and his office wrecked by a mob.² The attitude of Cincinnati is further shown by the action of the trustees of Lane Seminary, concurred in by the president,³ by which the students were forbidden to organize, or belong to anti-slavery societies, or "hold meetings or speak on the subject." As a result, most of the students and several professors withdrew in a body.⁴ When Oberlin College voted to receive negroes as students, three professors and thirty students from Lane Seminary joined the new college in 1835.⁵

Previous to the convening of the General Conference, there had been an insurrection of slaves in Virginia. The result was that most southerners were more than ever incensed at abolitionists.⁶ Perhaps because of this antagonism, which was shared by most northern Methodists, no change in the attitude of the Church towards slavery was anticipated. William Smith of Virginia said: "The days spent on this question will be days of excitement and anxiety; but they will pass away; and when over, there will be one reflection prominent in many minds — we have wasted time, talked

long, and loud, and gained nothing. The voice of the church will speak the same language that it speaks *now*.”⁷

Most of the delegates to the General Conference would gladly have avoided the slavery question, but an address from the English Wesleyan Church, and a number of petitions from abolition conferences and local anti-slavery societies made it impossible to longer delay meeting the issue.⁸ The British address stirred the Conference profoundly. English Methodists regretted, so it was affirmed, that a former appeal had excited American Methodists and caused them embarrassment, but they continued to hope that the emancipation of slaves in the United States might be consummated. They disclaimed any intention of meddling in American affairs, and declared that they were advocating nothing for Americans that they had not adopted for themselves. They closed their address by expressing the hope that Americans might “adopt such measures as” might “lead to the safe and speedy emancipation of the whole slave population of their great and interesting country.”⁹

Nothing could have been better calculated to give the few abolitionists of the Conference an opportunity to present their anti-slavery arguments. During the debate on the address, which lasted through almost the entire session of May 5, abolitionism was called an “unhallowed flame that has burned to the destruction of both whites and blacks.” In reply, Spicer of Troy conference remarked that a great deal of attention had been given to the trouble that abolitionism had caused, while calamities caused by slavery had not been so much as mentioned. In answer to the charge that southerners were not interested in the welfare of slaves, Dr. Capers declared that southern preachers were willing to give their lives for the salvation of negroes. John Early, another spokesman for the South, called upon the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church throughout the country to denounce abolitionists. Orange Scott sought to have the British address printed but his motion was defeated. When it was renewed on the following day by Nathan Bangs, the vote was a tie. Bishop Soule was the presiding officer, so, as Matlack says, “the document was not ordered printed.”¹⁰

When the reply to the British address was finally adopted, neither slavery nor abolitionism was directly censured. The Conference stated that British Methodists did not under-

stand conditions in the United States; that slavery was so interwoven with the affairs of the nation that it could not be readily removed; and that abolitionism had been the cause of considerable trouble to American Methodists.¹⁰

An exciting struggle was precipitated on May 3, when Stephen G. Roszel of Baltimore conference moved the appointment of a committee on slavery, who should consider all documents bearing on the topic. The motion was tabled.¹¹ But a week later, a committee was appointed to consider addresses of New Hampshire and New England conferences on the subject of slavery. Of the seven ministers who composed this committee only two were abolitionists.¹² May 14, a petition from certain persons in New England conference dealing with slavery was presented by Orange Scott and referred to the proper committee. Nathan Bangs, editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, attempted to hinder the abolition advance by moving that the Conference receive no petition "unless subscribed by the memorialists in their own proper signatures." An amendment to substitute "authorized" for "proper" was lost. Bangs then withdrew his motion but it was renewed by Roszel, and after being debated by several delegates, the vote was taken and the motion lost. Following this action, memorials from New Hampshire, Troy and Oneida conferences, and from many other smaller groups, were presented to the conference and, on motion of Nathan Bangs, referred to the committee on slavery.¹³

The report of the Committee on Slavery, presented on May 21, was clearly the handiwork of the pro-slavery and conservative majority. The committee declared that they had seriously considered the subject referred to them and were of the opinion that "the prayers of the memorialists" could not be granted. They believed that "it would be highly improper for the General Conference to take any action that would alter or change" the rule on slavery. They therefore submitted for adoption a resolution which stated that it was inexpedient to change the Discipline on the subject of slavery, and that further agitation of the subject in the General Conference was considered "improper."¹³

There had been plenty of agitation. During the first days of the Conference, one of the weekly meetings of the Cincinnati anti-slavery society was held, and two General Con-

ference delegates from New England, Storrs and Norris, briefly addressed the meeting. The result was that fifteen new members were added to the society. May 12, Roszel introduced a preamble and two resolutions dealing with the "crime" of these abolitionists. The preamble recited that the country had been profoundly stirred by the activities of abolitionists; that it was reported that two members of the Conference had increased the excitement in Cincinnati by lecturing in favor of abolitionism; that such a course probably would bring upon the Conference the suspicion and distrust of the community; and that the situation demanded a full statement of the position of the Conference. The resolutions declared that the Conference disapproved the conduct of the two members who had so disgraced their brethren; and that the Conference not only opposed abolitionists, but disclaimed "any right, wish or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation existing between master and slave as it exists in the slaveholding states of this Union."¹⁴

The excitement produced by these resolutions was intense,¹⁵ two days being devoted to the debates which followed their introduction.¹⁶ Scott proposed an amendment by which the Conference would go on record against slavery as well as against abolitionism, but the delegates refused to accept, by a vote of 123 to 15, even the language of the Discipline on the subject.¹⁷ It was during the debate on these resolutions that Scott declared that abolitionism could not be crushed. Said he: "When you can put your foot on one of the burning mountains and smother its fires — when you can roll back the current of the thundering falls of Niagara — or stop the sun in its course, you may then begin to think about 'crushing abolitionism!' *Sir, the die is cast* — the days of the captivity of our country are numbered! ITS REDEMPTION IS WRITTEN IN HEAVEN!!"¹⁸ But the warning of Scott availed nothing. The first resolution was adopted, 122 to 11. The first part of the second was agreed to, 120 to 14, and the whole adopted, 137 to 0.¹⁹

One writer has pointed out that the introduction of these resolutions really defeated the purposes of the southerners because abolitionists were given an opportunity to defend themselves and expound their doctrines. As a consequence, northerners were more than ever convinced that slavery was wrong. Luther Lee believed that the Conference had sought

to abridge the right of free speech, and that the abolitionists were right. He acted upon his convictions and joined the anti-slavery ranks.²⁰ The Garrisonian school viewed with scorn the attempt to crush the abolition movement in the Church. The fourteen who "would not bow the knee to slavery in any shape" were commended; while the South was bitterly condemned as belonging with those who had crucified the Christ.²¹

If it were expected that these attacks on abolitionism would result in checking the discussion of the slavery question, the hope was vain. Orange Scott again disturbed the Conference by circulating a pamphlet among the members, which gave an account of the debates on the question at issue. May 24, Mr. Winans proposed a resolution which condemned the "Address" as "palpably false, and calculated to make an impression to the injury of the character of some of the members engaged in the aforesaid discussion." It was also declared that the pamphlet was an "outrage on the dignity of this body," and merited "unqualified reprehension."²² Scott asked that, since he was the author of the address, his name be inserted in the resolution, but his request was denied. Winans spoke at length in support of his measure, and this gave Scott another opportunity to expound the doctrines of the radicals.²³ The motion to refer the resolution to a select committee was defeated, and the adoption of the Winans resolution ordered, 97 to 19. That all might know the position of the General Conference, it was ordered that their action in this instance should be published in the *Western Christian Advocate* and the *Christian Advocate and Journal*.²²

That Church leaders, North as well as South, were in complete accord with the action taken, may be gathered from a letter which Nathan Bangs wrote to the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, May 26. He agreed with Winans that Scott's address contained "unfair, and even false statements." He affirmed that the abolition agitation was irritating and "much to be dreaded as a troubler of our Israel." That unfairness and misrepresentation had been resorted to, proved to Bangs that the movement was unsound and unworthy of the people's confidence. He urged that, while charity might make allowance for the motives of abolitionists, yet no one should be deceived by the "garbled statements" made by Scott.²⁴

In justice to Scott it should be said that, while the accusation was freely made that there had been unfairness and untruthfulness in Scott's statement, absolutely no proof was presented to sustain the assertion.

So irritating was the course of the abolitionists in the General Conference that some southern leaders advocated that the rule on slavery be expunged from the *Discipline*, and some even favored a division of the Church. In fact, the southern delegates held a caucus for the purpose of devising a plan of separation from the Methodist Episcopal Church, unless the North so modified "the *Discipline* as to tolerate slavery, or make it no bar to membership in the Church." Cartwright declares that William Smith was the leader of this movement. But the southern extremists were too few in numbers to accomplish separation.²⁵ The time for division had not fully come.

Slaveholding seems to have been a factor in the choice of new bishops. Southern delegates nominated William Capers, John Early and Thomas A. Morris as those who would be most acceptable to the South. Morris was elected on an early ballot.²⁶ Capers refused to be a candidate because he was "from necessity, not from choice, a slaveholder," and because "it would prejudice a bishop at the north to be connected with it."²⁷ Brunson asserts that "it was understood and agreed even in the South at that time, that no slaveholder should fill the Episcopal office."²⁸

But if this point were perfectly understood in the South in 1836, it does not seem to have been so well apprehended in the North. James B. Finley wrote a letter, October 1, 1839, in which he said that he wanted a "Southern man for our Episcopate and Editors, that will come out in opposition to this lot of all demon-abolitionism." He said he had been charged with voting for William Capers for bishop in 1836; and with the saying that if he were elected as a delegate again, he would do the same. Finley refused to deny the indictment against him.²⁹ Even Cartwright met with the southern delegates and declared his entire willingness to vote for Capers, Winans or Early — or for any other Southerner, satisfactory to the South.³⁰

Early in May, plans were made to discourage all discussion of slavery after the adjournment of the General Conference. May 11, Roszel proposed that the committee which had

been appointed to draft the "Pastoral Address" to the members and friends of the Church, should especially consider the subject of abolitionism and make it perfectly clear that the Conference was opposed to the radical program.³¹ Orange Scott suggested an amendment to the motion, providing for a section on slavery in the address. As a result of this interference, Roszel's motion was withdrawn.³²

Evidently the Committee who wrote the address knew the sentiment of the Conference, for the document was an unsparing condemnation of abolitionism and the tactics of abolitionists in the General Conference. They declared that they were convinced that abolitionists were harming rather than helping the slaves, because planters had become alarmed and were refusing to allow Methodist missionaries to have free access to the slaves. Mutual forbearance was urged upon both abolitionists and southerners. No doubt, the message was meant especially for anti-slavery agitators, for the Committee asserted: "From every view of the subject which we have been able to take, and from the most calm and dispassionate survey of the ground we have come to the solemn conviction, that the only safe, scriptural, and prudent way, for us, both as ministers and people, to take, is wholly to refrain from this agitating subject."³³

Neither of the three parties — conservative, abolition, pro-slavery — was entirely calm as a result of these exciting debates. Nathan Bangs may be considered a representative of the conservative party. Writing on June 17, just after the adjournment of the General Conference, he warned his readers against the reports of Conference debates as published in the *Philanthropist* and the pamphlet of Scott.³⁴ The fact that Bangs did not find a single instance in which a southerner had made a misstatement or been guilty of an exaggeration indicates that he and those he represented were in hearty sympathy with the South.

Naturally, Garrison was greatly incensed at the action of the Conference. He affirmed that he had seen the growing corruption of the churches until he had "ceased to be astonished at any degree of infatuation or depravity which they may exhibit." Again he said: "Here we have, as a gazing stock for infidels, the highest ecclesiastical body of a large church, whose 'dignity is outraged' by a persecuted member calmly and heroically defending himself and his

brethren. Proclaim it not in Tammany Hall, publish it not among the heathen." He asserted that abolitionists outside the Methodist Church had been attacked in General Conference debates, and that James G. Birney had been called "*the vilest miscreant*."³⁵ Garrison declared that the Methodist Church needed a prophet to deliver the message of Micah.³⁶ So disappointed was the great abolitionist that he called the General Conference of 1836 a "cage of unclean birds and a synagogue of Satan." For this utterance he was roundly rebuked by *Zion's Herald*, which reminded him that fourteen of the "unclean birds" were abolitionists.³⁷

Methodist abolition papers were as radical as Garrison and Birney. The editor of the *Pittsburg Conference Journal* declared that "MODESTY and PRUDENCE should dictate to Southern men not to attempt to force themselves as Ambassadors of Christ upon those who can not receive them as such."³⁸ He affirmed that many northerners were dissatisfied with the General Conference because of the attitude on slavery and abolitionism. He asserted that the whole North was abolitionist "in a qualified sense," and that these had the power in the General Conference to pass any legislation they pleased. The only reason they refrained from radical action was that the country was in a ferment of excitement.³⁹ Another radical paper, *Zion's Watchman*, condemned the *Virginia Sentinel* for openly advocating "a division of the Methodist Episcopal Church because its editors and correspondents think they have been proscribed in not having a slaveholding bishop to preside over them."⁴⁰

The pro-slavery faction also had able apologists. In refutation of the statements which had been quoted from the Pittsburg paper, the editor of the *Virginia Sentinel* simply called attention to the vote of the General Conference on the subject of abolitionism and suggested that the northern paper was untrustworthy.⁴¹ The suggestion that southerners show due modesty and prudence in their demand that they should not be barred from becoming bishops because they were slaveholders, stirred the South profoundly.⁴² The assertion that Southerners were angry because no slaveholders had been elected to the Board of Bishops was declared to be false. Southerners only objected to the proscription of their section. The editor declared that they had not demanded a slaveholding bishop but had asserted that being a slaveholder

ought not to be a barrier to the highest office in the gift of the Church.⁴⁰

But there was also a more radical note. William Smith, publisher and one of the editors of the *Sentinel*, called upon the South to support his paper, rather than allow it to continue simply a branch of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. Another writer resented the proscription of the South because of slavery and urged that delegates be no longer sent to another General Conference, except to "fix the boundary between northern fanatics and southern rights."⁴³ Another inveighed against sending "delegates longer to an assembly where a bigoted and reckless majority silence all their appeals for justice and right, by their fanatical clamors; and even trample upon their feelings as men and ministers."⁴⁴ In reply to the last correspondent, the editor attempted to allay the feeling that had been aroused.⁴⁵

The troublers of Methodism, led by the intrepid and capable Orange Scott, had succeeded even in their failure. The introduction of memorials, resolutions and documents of different kinds had stirred the antagonism of various groups towards each other as perhaps nothing else could have done. Abolitionists had been condemned, sometimes without an adequate opportunity to defend themselves, but on every occasion they were able to strike one more blow for freedom. On the other hand, conservatives and pro-slavery delegates had been able to overwhelm anti-slavery delegates on every occasion. When it was inadvisable, from a pro-slavery viewpoint, that a document be printed, it was not done; when it would seem to further the desires of the South to have any document published, there was no lack of votes to make the action valid. So far as the immediate results were concerned, Long was undoubtedly right when he said that slavery was triumphant in the Methodist Episcopal Church in 1836.⁴⁶

1. Birney, James G. Birney and His Times, p. 258.

2. Hart, Slavery and Abolition, p. 193.

3. The president was Dr. Lyman Beecher, father of Henry Ward Beecher and Harriet Beecher Stowe. The latter "made some observations during her residence which were later incorporated into *Uncle Tom's Cabin*." (Ibid., p. 190.)

4. Macy, The Anti-Slavery Crusade—A Chronicle of the Gathering Storm, p. 74. Cf. Hart, Slavery and Abolition, p. 191.

5. Hart, Slavery and Abolition, pp. 192-3.

6. Brunson, A. Western Pioneer, Volume I, pp. 390-91.

7. Virginia Conference Sentinel, Volume I, p. 39, col. 1; May 13, 1836.

8. Matlack, The Life of Orange Scott, p. 85.

9. Elliot, *The Great Secession*, cols. 916-18.
10. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 87. The result would probably have been the same if any other bishop had been presiding. Soule was especially disliked because of his later connection with the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.
11. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 430 (1836).
12. *Ibid.*, p. 442.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 448 (1836).
Cf. *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, Volume I., pp. 85, col. 6—86, col. 1; August 5, 1836.
14. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 447. Cf. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 88-9. The resolutions follow: "Resolved, by the delegates of the annual Conferences in General Conference assembled: 1. That they disapprove, in the most unqualified sense, the conduct of the two members of the General Conference, who are reported to have lectured in this city recently, upon and in favour of immediate abolitionism.
"Resolved. 2. That they are decidedly opposed to modern abolitionism and wholly disclaim any right, wish, or intention to interfere in the civil and political relation existing between master and slave as it exists in the slaveholding States of the Union."
15. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., pp. 445-7 (1836).
16. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 90.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 96-99.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 95.
19. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 446 (1836). Cf. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume X., p. 181, cols. 4-5; July 8, 1836.
20. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 134-5.
31. *The Emancipator* (May 26, 1836) was quoted by *The Liberator*, Volume XII., p. 170, col. 5; October 28, 1842. The comment of the *Emancipator* was as follows: "Fourteen would not bow the knee to slavery in any shape So much for the slaveholding Christianity of the Methodist church! If we mistake not, the proceedings in the General Conference will show up the Christianity of the South in no very enviable light. No doubt it can be very devout at times—make very pathetic speeches at religious anniversaries—and so could the religion of those who crucified the Son of God. We shall see whether the religion of the South is any better." So far as the vote indicated, the North might have been included in the denunciation.
22. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume I., p. 479 (1836).
23. *Ibid.*, p. 486. Cf. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 99-106.
24. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume X., p. 167, col. 1; June 10, 1836.
25. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, p. 361. Cf. *The Liberator*, Volume VI., p. 93, col. 1; June 11, 1836.
26. Peck, *The Life and Times of George Peck*, pp. 173, 188.
27. *Ibid.*, pp. 173-4. Cf. Peck, *Slavery and the Episcopacy*, p. 53. When Capers was urged, in 1832, to become a candidate for the episcopacy, "on the ground that he was irretrievably a slaveholder" he refused to permit his name to be used in this connection. It may be observed that it was Capers, even according to the hostile Peck, who raised the objection and not a northerner.
28. Brunson, *A Western Pioneer*, Volume I., p. 394.
29. *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 36; July 4, 1845.
30. (Nashville) *Christian Advocate*, Volume XXI.; March 12, 1857. The statement of the editor is as follows: "The first time we ever saw him (Cartwright) was at the General Conference in the year 1836. He then and there met the delegates from the Southern Conferences, and, in a speech made before them, asserted that the South was entitled to a bishop, and should not be proscribed because of slavery. That he himself was with the South in feeling and sentiment; that he was willing and anxious to vote for a Southern man for bishop; that his owning slaves was no objection to him; he was willing to vote for Capers, Winans, Early—any one on whom the South might concentrate; that to use his own elegant figure, 'the negro was no impediment in his

- way; he was ready to pin back his ears, grease him, and swallow him whole, wool and all."
31. Journals of the General Conference, Volume I., p. 443. The resolution was that "the committee appointed to draft a pastoral letter to our preachers, members and friends be, and they are hereby instructed to take notice of the subject of modern abolition, that has so seriously agitated the different parts of our country, and that they let our preachers, members, and friends know that the General Conference are opposed to the agitation of that subject, and will use all prudent means to put it down."
 32. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 88.
 33. Elliot, *The Great Secession*, cols. 915-16. Cf. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 109; Lee, *Autobiography*, p. 135; Crawford, *Centennial of New England Methodism*, p. 211. Dr. Parkhurst comments: "Spirit of John Wesley! what would he have said at such language? Thus did those men seek to quiet and restrain an aroused Christian conscience."
 34. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume X., p. 170, col. 6; June 17, 1836. The passage reads: "I think it proper to warn our readers against receiving the reports of the speeches in the General Conference on the subject of abolitionism, as published in the *Philanthropist* and the *Address* to the General Conference by a member of that body (Scott). In some parts they are mere caricatures, and greatly colored."
 35. *The Liberator*, Volume VI., p. 95, cols. 4-5; June 11, 1836. Birney does not seem to have despaired of the situation. Said he: "We assure the friends of liberty, that our cause has been greatly advanced in this city, by the infatuated conduct of the slaveholders and their abettors in the General Conference. God is evidently fighting against them, by distracting their counsels and permitting them to foam out their own shame." (*Ibid.*)
 36. The passage in Micah is as follows: "Thus saith the Lord concerning the prophets that make my people err, that bite with their teeth, and cry, Peace; and he that putteth not into their mouths, they even prepare war against him: Therefore night shall be unto you that ye shall not have vision; and it shall be dark unto you, that ye shall not divine; and the sun shall go down over the prophets, and the day shall be dark over them." (Micah 3: 5-6).
 37. *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, Volume I., p. 94, col. 5; August 19, 1836.
 38. *Ibid.*, p. 119, col. 2; September 30, 1836.
 39. *Ibid.*, p. 115, col. 2; September 23, 1836.
 40. *Ibid.*, p. 130, col. 4; October 21, 1836. Sunderland was editor of *Zion's Watchman*.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 115, cols. 2-3; September 23, 1836.
 42. *Ibid.*, p. 119, col. 2; September 30, 1836.
 43. Elliot, *The Great Secession*, cols. 144-5. See also, *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, Volume I., p. 119, col. 3; September 30, 1836.
 44. *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, Volume I., p. 127, col. 2; October 14, 1836. The editor's statement reads: "With the wild notions and mal-practices of the Abolitionists, we have no affinity, either in our own principles or feelings; and we have looked to the probable rupture of all the bonds of union, ecclesiastical and civil, as a result of their practices, and not as a matter to be desired or sought after. It will be seen that our correspondent expresses the hope that the next General Conference may be for the purpose of running boundary lines between the Northern and Southern portions of our Church. We hope for a different issue." He concluded his editorial with a thrust at abolitionists: "One thing is clear, that the Methodist Episcopal Church in the Southern States has not been unmindful of the souls of the colored population. In every period of her history, she has directed her efforts to the promotion of their salvation, and was in the full career of usefulness when her course was stayed by the Abolitionists."
 45. *Virginia Conference Sentinel*, Volume I., p. 127, col. 2; October 14, 1836.
 46. *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, p. 31.

CHAPTER VI

THE RULE OF THE BISHOPS, 1836-1837

To the bishops of the Church the General Conference had given the not unwelcome task of protecting Methodism from the ravages of abolitionism. In conformity with the "Pastoral Address" New York conference adopted resolutions in which they disapproved of any of their number aiding abolitionists,¹ censured *Zion's Watchman* because it was anti-slavery,² and refused to elect any candidate deacon or elder unless he pledged himself to refrain from agitating the slavery question.³ Finally, the conference "affectionately advised and admonished" their members to refrain from attending any abolition meetings of any kind, "either in or out of the church," or disturbing "the peace of the Church." Against none of these resolutions were more than three votes recorded.⁴

New England and New Hampshire conferences were not so tractable. The former, which convened July 13, 1836, was involved in a number of serious difficulties, upon which action must be taken. The first concerned the veracity of Orange Scott, who had been accused at Cincinnati of making untruthful statements on the subject of abolitionism and slandering members of the General Conference. With a majority of his own conference supporting him, Scott was assured a complete and enthusiastic endorsement of everything he had said at Cincinnati.⁵ Then La Roy Sunderland was brought to trial, the charge being "slander or misrepresentation in repeated instances." He was required to correct his misstatements and cautioned to be more guarded henceforth in his utterances, but his character was approved.⁶

Two important episodes marked the close of the conference. The first was the result of the controversy between Bishop Hedding and Orange Scott. On the real question at issue there could be no compromise. Hedding had the power to suppress Scott and proceeded to exercise it.

Using his appointing power as a means of disciplining Scott, Hedding refused to re-appoint the abolitionist to his position as presiding elder, simply because he refused to stop lecturing against slavery.⁷ The second was a tardy attempt to adopt a report on slavery. The report was read on the last night of the conference. Bishop Hedding refused to put the motion for adoption to a vote, alleging that there was a strong majority who wished to debate the question before voting upon it. One of the conservatives made a motion to adjourn but this was easily defeated. Whereupon, the bishop read the list of appointments for the ensuing year and closed the conference.⁸ Elliott asserts that this conference was opposed to abolitionists,⁹ but the struggle between the ministers and the bishop does not support his statement. Nevertheless, Hedding had succeeded in preventing a motion hostile to slavery from being passed by the conference.

The agitation in New Hampshire conference centered around Hedding and George Storrs. Here again, the bishop used his power to discipline a refractory member. Many friends of Storrs urged Hedding to appoint him to a vacant presiding eldership. When Storrs asserted that he would speak against slavery, Hedding replied: "My obligation to the Church, then, will not allow me to appoint you presiding elder; for I should only be putting you in a more prominent place that you might do more mischief."¹⁰ The following morning, Storrs read a statement to the conference in which he said that he could not accept an appointment "under an officer of the General Conference in view of the action of that body on the subject of slavery." He requested that he be given a "location". As a result of the action of Hedding relative to Scott and Storrs, and his refusal to put to a vote a motion against slavery, many of the bishop's best friends became his bitterest enemies. So intense was the feeling against him that he felt compelled to change his place of residence. In the Fall of 1836 he moved from Lynn, Massachusetts to Lansingburgh, New York.¹⁰

In only one conference outside of New England were the abolitionists numerous enough to constitute a disturbing element. Between anti-slavery advocates and conservatives of Erie conference an exciting debate took place. But the con-

servatives won, for the final action of the conference was in support of the commands of the General Conference. Elliott declares that this result was obtained because a majority of the preachers and people belonged to the two chief political parties, both of which were under the control of the South.¹¹ Thus in every conference held in 1836 in which abolitionists were at all numerous, the work of the radicals was defeated, in two instances at least, because Bishop Hedding had used his power to weaken the abolitionists as much as possible. Outwardly, the Methodist Episcopal Church presented a united front against the radicalism of Garrison, Scott, Sunderland and Storrs;¹² beneath the surface, however, there might have been discovered the disappointed hopes, and the unwavering determination of those who saw the vision of a Church free from the taint of slavery.

By 1837 the discussion of the question of slavery in the Church had become more widespread than ever before. The Georgia conference declared that the intention of the rule on slavery had been perverted so that slavery was proclaimed a moral evil. This was denied and the declaration made that ministers had nothing to do with the institution of slavery except to make the condition of the slave as satisfactory as possible, and to bring to both slave and master the influences of the Christian religion. The course of the bishops was unqualifiedly approved. This action was heartily approved by South Carolina conference.¹³

The border conferences were divided in their attitude towards slavery. Kentucky conference required a member of that body to free some slaves who had come to him by the will of his father.¹⁴ Philadelphia conference refused to receive Matlack as a traveling preacher because he had assisted in the organization of an anti-slavery society. One member declared that even if the applicant were "as pious as St. Paul and as talented as an angel, he should never enter this conference as an abolitionist" if he were able to prevent it.¹⁵ The action of Baltimore conference caused considerable excitement. The ministers adopted a resolution, making the wrong of buying, selling or holding slaves to depend upon "the attendant circumstances of cruelty, injustice, or inhumanity on the one hand, or those of kindness or good intentions on the other, under which the transaction shall have been perpetrated." In all such cases, the charge of immorality

was to be brought against the minister or layman, and the decision governed by the conference interpretation.¹⁶

At Genesee conference, a committee of five was appointed to receive all petitions dealing with slavery and report what course would be proper for the conference to pursue in respect to that topic.¹⁷ Hedding would permit a vote on the motion for the appointment of this committee only on condition that he would not be expected to allow a vote on any report which he considered contrary to the Discipline or the advice of the General Conference of 1836. The motion was carried with this provision.¹⁸ So favorable to slaveholders was Hedding's statement that even the conservative Nathan Bangs declared that if he were Hedding he would not permit his address to be published, because, said he, "I would not dare to make such a use of my influence; that address, if published, will be understood, all through the South, as a defense of slavery."¹⁹

To this committee were referred the petitions of over seven hundred members of the Church within the bounds of the conference. These petitioners asked: (1) for an official expression of the conference on the question of slavery; and (2) that the conference memorialize the next General Conference for a change in the rule on slavery, making it more stringent. The report of the committee was in keeping with the circumstances under which the members were appointed. The second request of the petitioners was considered premature: since there would be two sessions of the conference before 1840. In regard to the first request, the committee declared that the Discipline, in affirming that slavery was a "great evil", referred not so much to its civil and political, but to its moral character. They believed further that the rule applied to the internal as well as the foreign traffic. In dealing with the whole subject, the committee urged that reason rather than sympathy be employed.

Three conclusions were recommended as the best judgment of the conference: (1) It was agreed that the subject might be investigated and that one might speak on slavery, but, considering its connection with the politics of the country, it was deemed inadvisable and improper to employ the Sabbath in that manner. (2) No part of the ministry should be neglected to call attention to this or any other subject which was of secondary importance to the real work

of the ministry. (3) The stirring up of hatred against those in authority in the Church was deplored, because it opened up the way for the denunciation of any member of the Church by another member. Such a course was especially deplored among ministers, who were the religious and moral leaders of the people.²⁰

In spite of this equivocal action, an anti-slavery society was formed with sixty charter members. Forty more ministers joined soon after. The constitution of the society was in conformity with the report on slavery, so that no radical action could be expected immediately. A beginning had been made, however, and the abolitionists might look forward with confidence to eventually winning the battle for freedom. The development of even this much anti-slavery sentiment was probably due to Orange Scott, who seemed to attend every conference of which Bishop Hedding was the presiding officer.²¹

Scott was also present at Erie conference and was instrumental in forming an anti-slavery society, made up of almost half the members of the conference.²² But for this year, the conservatives were victorious. The conference disclaimed, by a vote of 31 to 25, all connection with the society.²³ They also sustained the interpretation of the rule made by Baltimore conference, when, in spite of the heroic efforts of Scott, a motion condemning the resolutions of the southern conference was defeated, 32 to 29. This reverse did not dishearten the abolitionists but only spurred them on to greater efforts during the ensuing year.²⁴

When Oneida conference convened some two weeks later, Bishop Hedding and Scott again found themselves opposed to each other. The question of slavery was introduced early in the session and the bishop addressed the conference at considerable length, setting forth his views. Scott lectured in the Baptist church to a large audience, among whom were most of the Methodist ministers. George Peck then presented resolutions against Scott for presuming to lecture against slavery. Previous to this time, Hedding had refused to introduce Scott to the conference lest the ministers think that their bishop was in favor of anti-slavery principles. But Peck's resolution made it incumbent upon Hedding to permit Scott to defend himself. The debate never occurred; the resolutions were withdrawn, and Peck even refused to

furnish a copy of them to Scott when requested to do so. Due to the opposition to Scott in the conference, the other churches were closed to abolition meetings, and Scott was compelled to lecture outside, using the steps of the Baptist Church as a platform.²⁵ Again, the abolitionists must place their hope in the future.

Three conferences — New England, Maine and New Hampshire — constituted the abolition territory of the Methodist Church. All sessions of these conferences were exciting. So prominent an advocate of abolitionism had Scott become that Hedding, who had come to New England conference for that purpose, spent half a day dealing with him. Scott, who was absolutely fearless, took an equal time to reply. He was charged with "slander, unchristian conduct, and misrepresentation." He was prevailed upon to retract most of what he had said of a personal nature, and his character was then passed.²⁶ Bishop Waugh, the presiding officer, then attempted to prevent Scott from speaking against slavery. The latter wished to be left without appointment but he was assigned to a charge and the presiding elder instructed not to release him. Later in the year, however, nine ministers signed a statement in which they asserted their belief that Scott should be permitted to travel as much as possible for a year "for the benefit of his health." It seems that his health was not the best, but the fact remains that he did travel for the Anti-slavery Society a great deal of the time.²⁷

By far the greatest excitement, and the most far-reaching results, sprang from the struggle over the radical anti-slavery program. Memorials from 3,403 Methodists were received, but a motion to refer the same to a select committee was declared inadmissible by the bishop.²⁸ As a consequence of these arbitrary methods, a call, signed by about seven hundred preachers and laymen, and directed by Orange Scott and a fellow-abolitionist named Merritt, was made in *Zion's Herald*, October 13, 1837, for the first Methodist Anti-slavery convention, to be held at Lynn, Massachusetts. The purpose of the meeting was two-fold: (1) to strengthen abolition sentiment; (2) but more especially to express themselves on the right of petition and the powers of the annual conference.²⁸

Maine conference convened June 28, and the abolitionists immediately began their attacks. Orange Scott and George

Storrs lectured; and anti-slavery pamphlets were freely distributed among the preachers. Many petitions against slavery were in the hands of the ministers although they were not presented for fear of a collision with Bishop Waugh.²⁹ But the real strength of the abolitionists is shown by the fact that an anti-slavery society, with over seventy-five ministers as members, was organized. Scott reported that the conference had a decided majority in favor of the abolition of slavery and that the rest were not antagonistic to the radical program. He predicted that these ministers would take a strong stand against slavery the following year.²⁹

Ministers of New Hampshire conferences were determined to pass anti-slavery resolutions or none, but the opposition of Hedding was still more stubborn than that of Waugh.³⁰ Scott and Storrs were present to stir the anti-slavery party to the highest pitch of excitement.³¹ Hedding repeated what he had said at the other New England conferences — that whatever could be sanctioned according to the Golden Rule should be done, but that all else should be forbidden. His Golden Rule policy became the target of abolition scorn in the northeastern conferences. The bishop prevented the appointment of a committee on slavery,³² by refusing to put the motion for such a committee unless it was understood that all conference business prior to the appointment of preachers to their charges must be properly cared for before the committee's report was considered, and this report should not be opposed to the expressed will of the General Conference — the bishop to be the judge in both instances. The conference refused to comply with Hedding's wishes and the committee was not ordered.³³ Further, when an attempt was made to pass a motion condemning the resolutions of Baltimore conference relative to the interpretation of the rule on slavery, the bishop refused to entertain the motion.³⁴

By their rulings in New England conferences, Hedding and Waugh had hoped to destroy the rising power of abolitionists. The result was far different from what they probably anticipated, and certainly the opposite to what they desired. Anti-slavery Methodists increased their efforts. La Roy Sunderland published his "Testimony of God against Slavery,"³⁵ and by his lectures far and wide aided the cause. Orange Scott was especially prominent in building up anti-slavery

sentiment in a number of northern conferences until abolitionists became the controlling element.³⁶ At Cazenovia, New York, a layman offered a resolution that they would refuse to receive a preacher appointed by a bishop who had rejected resolutions such as had been presented in New England conference. Gerritt Smith here charged that the Methodist Church was a "rum-drinking, pro-slavery Church." This caused a controversy between Smith and Peck, who replied in the *Auburn Banner*. Peck maintains that his opponent retracted what he had said about the Church,³⁷ but even on the question of slavery, Smith had the support of at least one Methodist minister.³⁸ Another result of the proscription of conferences by these bishops was the increase in the number of anti-slavery societies. Many books, pamphlets and circulars — amounting, for the year 1837, to 718,267 copies — were published by the Anti-slavery Society.³⁹

Several observations may, with full justice, be made on the action of the bishops of the Methodist Church during these two years. In the first place, there is not one iota of evidence to show that any bishop raised the slightest objection to any resolution passed by a southern conference on slavery and abolition. On the contrary, Bishop Hedding refused to entertain a motion condemning Baltimore conference for their interpretation of the rule. The second observation is that the action of Hedding and Waugh, proscribing conferences and individuals, was a blow at the right of free speech. For ministers less bold than Scott and his followers there could be no liberty of speech without jeopardizing their standing in the conference. Finally, it may be affirmed that, while the immediate result of the bishops' rulings was wholly favorable to the South, the abolition propaganda had been spread tremendously in these two years. The Church was on the defensive, and the abolitionists, with all the zeal of Crusaders, launched their attacks with the greatest energy and skill.

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1. They declared that it was "the duty of the members of this conference wholly to refrain from all abolition measures and movements as being incompatible with their duty as ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ, and as promoters of the peace and welfare of the Church to which they belong."
 2. *Zion's Watchman* was condemned because it tended to "disturb the peace and harmony of the body, by sowing dissensions in the Church."
 3. They said that, while a man might have his own opinions on

slavery, "none ought to be elected to the office of a deacon or elder in our CHURCH UNLESS he gives a PLEDGE to the conference that he will refrain from agitating the church with the discussions of this subject." It is to be noted that all young men who sought admission into the ranks of the ordained clergy gave the required pledge.

4. Elliot, the Great Secession, cols. 141-2. Cf. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume X, p. 179, col. 4; July 1, 1836. The resolution read that "in the judgment of this conference, it is incompatible with the duty which the members owe to the church, as ministers for them to be engaged in attending anti-slavery conventions, delivering abolition lectures, or forming anti-slavery societies, either in or out of the church, or in any way agitating the subject so as to disturb the peace and harmony of the Church and that they be, and hereby are affectionately advised and admonished to refrain from all these things."
5. Matlack, The Life of Orange Scott, p. 107. The resolution reads: "That in view of all the facts, Brother Scott's character for truth, and veracity, stands fair and unimpeached."
6. The decision of the conference was as follows: "Resolved, That bro. Sunderland's writings have sometimes been unguarded and as a matter of course, have had a tendency to mislead the judgment; and that he be required to correct the misstatements made in reference to the General Conference, Doctor Bangs, and the New York Conference, and that he be advised to be more guarded in future, and that his character pass."
7. Matlack, The Life of Orange Scott, pp. 109-10. Cf. Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844, p. 40; Clark, The Life and Times of Hedding, p. 494; and Crawford, The Centennial of New England Methodism, p. 210. Parkhurst says that Hedding "actually exercised his prerogative as the appointing power to discipline and humiliate Orange Scott; and only because that man of conscience will not promise to close his lips on the subject of abolitionism."
8. Clark, The Life and Times of Hedding, pp. 495-6.
9. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 142-3.
10. Clark. The Life and Times of Hedding, pp. 496-8.
11. Gregg, The History of the Erie Conference, Volume I, pp. 337-9.
12. The statements from the *Emancipator* are scarcely exaggerated: "We aver, without qualification, that so far as the three great denominations (Presbyterian, Congregationalist and Methodist) are concerned, the AMERICAN CHURCH IS, AT THIS MOMENT, A SLAVERY-COUNTENANCING, A SLAVERY-PROTECTING, AND A SLAVEHOLDING CHURCH." (*Emancipator*, September 8, 1836) "If Jesus Christ himself were to come here to preach deliverance to the captives, they (the Methodists) would turn him out of the church. Yet Dr. Fisk will have it, there is no pro-slavery party in the Methodist Episcopal Church." (*Emancipator*, November 24, 1836) Both extracts are quoted in the *Liberator*, Volume XII, p. 170, col. 5; October 28, 1842.
13. Western Christian Advocate; Volume XV, p. 2, cols. 5-6; April 12, 1848. The minutes of Georgia conference of 1837 are quoted as follows:

"Whereas there is a clause in the Discipline of our Church which states that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery; and whereas the said clause has been perverted by some and used in such a manner as to produce the impression that the Methodist Episcopal Church believed slavery to be a moral evil,

Therefore, Resolved, That it is the sense of the Georgia annual conference, that slavery as it exists in the United States, is not a moral evil.

"Resolved, That we view slavery as a civil and domestic institution, and one which, as ministers of Christ, we have nothing to do with, further than to ameliorate the condition of the slave, by endeavoring to impart to him and his master the benign

influences of the religion of Christ, and aiding them both on their way to heaven.

"On motion, it was *Resolved, unanimously*, That the Georgia annual conference regard with feelings of profound respect and approbation the dignified course of the several superintendents or bishops in suppressing the attempts that have been made by various individuals to get up and protract an excitement in the Churches and country on the subject of abolitionism."

Some explanation of this action is offered by a correspondent of *Zion's Herald*, who wrote that conference members held a very high place in the society of the state. "It is this fact, which produces the extreme sensitiveness on some matters of domestic policy and political doctrines. No man not similarly situated, can tell how HE would act. All judicious men would require some time for reflection, before they would be willing to array themselves openly against all the leading men in the community, on matters of a political nature." (Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, pp. 69-70.)

14. Redford, *Western Cavaliers*, pp. 202-3.
15. Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, pp. 39-40.
16. Gregg, *The History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, p. 45.
17. Conable, *The History of the Genesee Conference*, p. 405.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 407-10. Cf. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 157-8.
19. Lee, *Autobiography*, p. 137.
20. Conable, *History of the Genesee Conference*, pp. 407-10. "Such practice tends, by necessary consequence, to the destruction of mutual confidence, and virtually says to any and every member of the Church who is under temptation to gratify a private pique against a fellow-member, 'Go, and do thou likewise.' Such a practice and especially among ministers, cannot but open the sluices of such indiscriminate detraction in the Church as will not so certainly purify it from the acknowledged evil of slavery, as it will provoke a holy God to take his Spirit from us and leave us to be the 'hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird.'" The editor of *Zion's Herald* wrote: "We most solemnly believe that a continual controversy on these topics will be blasting in its effects to the best interests of the church with which we are connected, and which we so ardently love." (Elliot, *The Great Secession*, col. 177).
21. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 133-4.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 128.
23. Gregg, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, pp. 46-7.
24. Fradenburgh, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, pp. 499-500. Cf. Gregg, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, p. 46.
25. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 128-31.
26. Mudge, *The History of the New England Conference*, p. 286.
27. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 118.
28. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 179.
29. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 124-6.
30. *Ibid.*, p. 147.
31. *Ibid.*, p. 126.
32. Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, pp. 57-60.
33. Clark, *The Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 504.
34. *Ibid.*, pp. 504-5.
35. *The Liberator*, Volume VII, p. 204, col. 5; December 15, 1837.
36. Elliot, *The Great Secession*, cols. 172-3. It is to be noted that, of Scott's one thousand members at Lowell, Massachusetts in 1836-7, seven-eighths were abolitionists, as were all but one of his official members.
37. Peck, *The Life and Times of G. Peck*, p. 193.
38. Long, *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, p. 31.
39. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 180-81. It is to be noted that an official statement of the American Anti-Slavery Society for 1836 gives the number of documents as 1,095,800. (*The Missionary Herald*, Volume XXXII, p. 263—Year 1836).

CHAPTER VII

THE CRUSHING OF THE ABOLITIONISTS 1838-1839

The greatest excitement characterized Methodist papers and conferences in 1838 and 1839. That which created as much bitterness as any other event was the murder of Elijah P. Lovejoy at Alton, Illinois.¹ Luther Lee, who, until this time, had done very little in behalf of the abolition cause, preached a sermon in which he condemned the mob and vindicated the principles for which Lovejoy had been killed. He admitted that he might be censured as an abolitionist, and added: "If this is abolitionism, then I am an abolitionist, and I would be glad, were it possible, to give my abolitionism a thousand tongues, and write it in letters of flame on the wings of every wind, to be seen and read of all men."² Scott wrote an article in which he defended Lovejoy and urged that the press at Alton be set up again and the fight for free speech and a free press continued. Scott was a non-resistant but contended that Lovejoy had the right to protect himself, by force, if necessary.³ For this statement he was bitterly condemned by the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, which charged that he favored force to protect abolitionism — a charge which was untrue — and attempted to show that he was not to be trusted as a leader.³ Fisk published a statement on the same subject, which condemned the abolitionist more than those who murdered him, and put the blame on Lovejoy, because he had disregarded the excited state of public opinion.² The South itself was scarcely more bitter against Lovejoy and those who supported him.⁴

In almost every northern conference, an exciting struggle occurred between abolitionists and conservatives. Due to statements which Scott had made relative to the power exercised by some of the bishops, Hedding preferred charges against Scott for lack of Christian sincerity, and using "Bishop Hedding and other bishops in an unbrotherly and disrespectful manner, unbecoming a Methodist preacher."

But the conference refused to censure Scott, and his character was passed. Sunderland was likewise supported by the conference. Hedding considered that he had been unjustly treated, but he was unable to secure redress until the ensuing General Conference, when he hoped that his administration would be fully vindicated.⁵

The real danger to abolitionists came as a result of the proposal to appoint a committee composed of six abolitionists and six conservatives to consider a "Plan of Pacification" which had been outlined by a member of Maine conference.⁶ According to this plan, which had the approval of Fisk and Bangs, and bishops Soule and Hedding, members of the conference would have been completely muzzled⁷. Garrison declared that it was a "cunningly devised scheme, to ensnare abolitionists, and induce them to lay their heads in the lap of Delilah, while they could be shorn of their strength by the razor of ecclesiastical authority." The scheme almost succeeded. The first vote was 64 to 21 for adoption. Scott now exerted himself, and some, who had not voted before, voted against the plan, while others changed their votes. Finally, the motion for adoption was lost, 64 to 54.⁸

On the seventeenth and last day of the conference, Hedding announced that he had finished all the business required of him, except reading the journal and closing the conference. He informed the ministers that he must leave soon in order to reach Maine conference in time for the opening session and that, if they desired, they might meet for a longer period under the presidency of Bishop Soule. The conference voted to have the journal and appointments read immediately.⁹ It was at this juncture that Scott offered resolutions on slavery that had already been passed at other conferences. Hedding refused to permit a motion for their adoption, alleging that there was insufficient time to consider them. He declared that he had promised to read the appointments in half an hour and he must keep his word. Three-fourths of an hour elapsed before the appointments were read. Then he asked the pardon of the conference for not keeping his word, and one member "proposed to grant him pardon for that, and for taking time enough to adopt the resolutions; but he declined to admit them."¹⁰ Such wrangling accomplished

no immediate result except to arouse the animosity of abolitionists and conservatives for each other, but it did aid in keeping the question of slavery and abolition always in the forefront of discussion.

Scott's prediction in 1837 that Maine conference would take a strong stand against slavery was doomed to disappointment. Immediately after the adjournment of New England conference, Scott had an account of his trial and Bishop Hedding's administration during the New England conference printed as "*Zion's Herald extra.*" Copies of his statement were distributed freely among preachers and laymen at Maine conference. But Hedding took no notice of his propaganda, and abolitionists seem to have accomplished very little.¹¹ On the contrary, the conservatives controlled the conference. Much to Garrison's surprise and grief, the "Plan of Pacification" was adopted, 86 to 6.¹²

When the intractable New Hampshire conference convened, Scott and Storrs, with other abolitionists, were present to use their influence against any compromise on slavery. The conference business ran smoothly until it came time to examine the character of each minister. At this juncture, an abolitionist quietly moved the appointment of a committee of five, who should consider the case of each minister who had attended the anti-slavery convention at Lowell, Massachusetts in October, 1837. This was done to give abolitionists an opportunity to speak, which they did for about two hours. Every minister who had participated in the anti-slavery convention was challenged by another abolitionist and, after a short discussion, his character was passed. When this procedure became tiresome, a resolution was adopted, 81 to 1, "That it is the sense of this conference that an attendance, on the part of any of its members, on abolition conventions, delivering abolition lectures, or circulating abolition periodicals, does not involve immorality, or militate against his ministerial character." This resolution was agreed to by Bishop Morris so far as the first part was concerned, but the second section was pronounced out of order "on the ground that it approved what the General Conference had condemned". An appeal was taken from his decision, and Morris agreed to put the motion on the appeal, provided

his exceptions was entered in the journal. Another motion, to publish the resolution, was agreed to by Morris, provided his decision and exception were also published.¹³

Abolitionists from other conferences seem to have been responsible for the strong anti-slavery sentiment in the conference. July 9, the anti-slavery society of the conference condemned plans to stop anti-slavery agitation.¹⁴ Although the "Plan of Pacification" was not brought forward at this conference, the society declared: (1) that the pacification proposed in other conferences would lead to contention rather than peace; (2) that abolitionists who had agreed to the plan had sacrificed their principles; and (3) that all Methodists should leave the proposed compromise alone.¹⁵ From an abolition viewpoint this was one of the most successful of the conferences of that year.

The slavery issue came before Troy conference through the attempt of conservatives to try a brilliant young abolitionist named Spooner. Conservatives rejected all overtures to settle the dispute without a trial. It was then that Cyrus Prindle, one of the most able men of the conference, announced that he would defend Spooner and that the opposition might proceed as soon as they desired. Confronted by such an advocate, the cowards immediately dropped the case and the accused minister's character was passed.¹⁶

In Black River conference, Luther Lee was the abolitionist marked for slaughter. An anti-slavery convention, held at Utica, New York, had appointed Lee to represent anti-slavery Methodists at the Conference of the Canada Wesleyan Church. The Conference refused to receive him officially inasmuch as he was not the delegate of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Jesse T. Peck and two other official delegates assured the Canadians that it would greatly offend their Church if Lee were officially recognized.¹⁷

It was for making these statements in *Zion's Herald* — for the *Christian Advocate and Journal* refused to admit them — that Lee was accused in Black River conference, and the approval of his character delayed. He was given until the following morning to prepare his defense and he determined to fight to the bitter end. But when the trial was ready to start, Peck withdrew his charges and Lee's character was passed. Peck declared that "he had been pressed

and overborne by the leading members of the Conference, who had urged him to this course." Since this attempt to cripple Lee had failed, martyrdom must be sought in another direction. In spite of the fact that Lee had a large family to support and was one of the ablest preachers of the conference, Bishop Morris appointed him to Oswego, where both Church and people were in financial straits as a result of the panic of 1837. Lee refused to go and obtained a location.¹⁸

The resolutions of Oneida conference seem to have favored the radicals; at least no action was taken to "vindicate the Church" or denounce abolitionists.¹⁹ The sessions of Genesee conference at Elmira, New York, were more exciting. On the second day, the anti-slavery society met for the anniversary program, but the preacher in charge at Elmira informed the abolitionists that a public meeting to discuss slavery would give great offense to trustees and members of his church. The society therefore adjourned to Clinton Island, near by. Village authorities warned them not to hold a second meeting, and when they persisted, a mob attacked the ministers. On the following day, the conference condemned the mob but also adopted a resolution in which they censured the anti-slavery meeting as "unjustifiable and highly improper" since they had been advised and warned by the village authorities not to carry out their program. They also declared that this act on the part of the abolitionists was "calculated to dishonor the character of the gospel ministry in general, and to lower the dignity of this Conference in particular."²⁰

Intense excitement also marked Erie conference which convened at Painesville, Ohio. The conference disclaimed "all intention of interfering with any man's opinions," and quoted the Discipline to show their opposition to slavery; but they declared "it incompatible with the duties and obligations of Methodist preachers to spend their time delivering abolition lectures, contributing to the getting up of abolition conventions, or in circulating abolition papers." John J. Steadman won the approval of conservatives, of whom the bishop was one, by his powerful advocacy of the resolution. The conservatives were entirely successful, the resolution being adopted, 36 to 30.²¹

Two ministers were brought to trial under this ruling. J. S. Barris was charged with insubordination to the constituted authorities of the Church, and with participation in anti-slavery programs. He had been disobedient to the advice of the General Conference of 1836; and had arranged for, and presided at an abolition meeting, and given an abolition sermon in a Congregational church. He was also tried because he had given the preachers of New Castle Circuit permission to attend an abolition convention at Utica, New York. A compromise was effected, after which Barris was admonished by the bishop, by order of the conference, to refrain from agitating the question. His character was then passed.²² The second preacher was much more defiant. Benjamin Preston was charged with having compared the proceedings of New York conference to a Roman inquisition; with saying that he would lecture and circulate abolition papers as much as possible and "the conference might help itself if it could;" with aiding an anti-slavery society in Monroe Village, although he was urged not to do so; and with "desecrating the Sabbath by delivering abolition lectures thereon." Preston admitted all the charges except that deliverance of abolition lectures on Sunday was a desecration of the Sabbath. He was pronounced guilty and deprived of his parchment and suspended for one year. The following evening, a large audience assembled to hear Preston's defense. He denounced the action of the conference and compared it with a Roman inquisition.²³

As has been intimated, New York conference was decidedly conservative. Scott preferred charges against Dr. Bangs for attacks upon him in the press to the injury of his character and influence but Bangs' character was passed.²⁴ On the other hand, three members of the conference were suspended because of their connection with the anti-slavery program. The indictment was that they had attended the anti-slavery convention at Utica, which was deemed "unauthorized, schismatic, and revolutionary," and that they had acted contrary to the advice of the General Conference to all preachers "wholly to refrain from all abolition movements and associations." They were also censured for writing for abolition papers. Luther Lee was their counsel, but it was apparent, even before the trial began, that they were to be convicted.

They were re-instated only when they promised to cease agitating the slavery question. Two others conformed to the wishes of the conference and were not suspended. The determination of the conference to destroy all remnants of abolitionism was also shown in the attempt to send David Plumb to a poor circuit because he was an abolitionist. He refused to go and the following year was expelled from the conference. The conference also condemned *Zion's Watchman* and prohibited ministers acting as its agents. Finally, resolutions were adopted recommending the Colonization Society to the people, and forbidding ministers to attend anti-slavery meetings, form anti-slavery societies, or give lectures against slavery. The resolutions concluded by stating; "It is ardently to be hoped, therefore, that within the bounds of the New York Annual Conference, the churches will have peace."²⁵

Just what some Methodists thought of these proceedings may be surmised from the statement of one writer, "Disciple of Wesley." After declaring that the large churches were rapidly becoming more iniquitous in character than ever before, he cited the action of the Presbyterian General Assembly which refused to permit the discussion of slavery. Then, turning to the Methodists, he asserted that the New York conference of 1838 had emulated their "man-stealing confederates in their usurpation over the rights of conscience, and their unrighteous opposition to their own avowed doctrines and discipline."²⁶

The frontier Michigan conference was established in 1836. For two years the slavery question was not discussed because abolitionists were few in number, and the majority were not prepared to censure them. But in 1838 the abolitionists in the Church were condemned; action was taken against abolition lectures; and *Zion's Watchman* was declared "anti-methodistical in its general course." Pressure was also brought to bear upon those members who urged their people to subscribe for abolition papers rather than for those which had the Church's official sanction.²⁷

Not only were there trials of ministers, but anti-slavery laymen were also condemned. The case of one Brown of Auburn, New York, is typical. In February, 1839, he was charged with misrepresentation, slander and falsehood. The

specifications under the first charge will indicate the character of the whole. "Specification 1: Saying that the meeting at the organization of the Wesleyan Anti-slavery Society was numerously attended. Specification 2: Saying that the doctrine had recently been set up that when ministers become members of an Annual Conference they surrender the keeping of their consciences to that body, and that members yield to the Church or minister the keeping of that sacred trust." All members who had attended the anti-slavery prayer-meeting in which the statements were made, were declared disqualified to try this case. Even then, Brown was acquitted on all the charges brought against him except the second specification given above, but this was sufficient to secure his expulsion from the Church.²⁸

Conservatives also did everything possible to prevent abolitionists from speaking against slavery. At Auburn, New York, the Methodist minister refused to permit Luther Lee to preach, although he had formerly been a pastor there. Thereupon, the Presbyterian minister invited him to speak in his church against slavery. Very few attended the Methodist services. At Warsaw, in the same state, he encountered a presiding elder who refused him permission to speak except at two o'clock in the afternoon. Lee humorously declares that the elder, Mr. Alverson, "sung long meter, prayed long meter, administered the sacrament long meter, and by the time he got through with all these long meters it was two o'clock." Alverson had undoubtedly hoped that the audience, wearied with his pious "long meters" would depart and thus leave Lee without an audience. But in spite of the disadvantages of the hour, a large number remained to hear him. That evening Lee had his revenge. All the people who attended church, with the exception of nine, heard Lee at the Congregational church on the subject of slavery. Of the nine who attended divine worship at the Methodist church, one had been sent by Lee to count the rest.²⁹ At Middletown, Connecticut, the Methodist minister refused to permit the bell of his church to be rung to announce an anti-slavery meeting in the Congregational church. The people became so indignant at this lack of courtesy, which had always been extended on other occasions, that enough money for a new bell for the Congregationalists was quickly subscribed. The

Methodist minister, Mr. Hodgson, then challenged Lee to a debate on slavery, but at the time set, Hodgson failed to appear.³⁰

Lee and Scott also encountered considerable opposition from within the abolition ranks. Some anti-slavery advocates, including Garrison and Wendell Phillips, advocated women's rights and non-resistance. Lee endeavored to get control of the anti-slavery meetings in order to guide the organization's policy.³¹ His attitude towards the new doctrines of Garrison and Phillips was the same as that of Orange Scott. The latter once declared that he hoped no Methodist would "sustain that rotten-hearted, no-human government, women's rights institution, called the *Massachusetts Anti-slavery Society*."³²

Favorite instruments of abolitionists were anti-slavery conventions and the press. One of the most important of these conventions was held at Utica, New York. Here, the delegates asserted that countenancing a known sin was dishonorable to ministers and to the cause of Christ; and that the " 'peace of the church' cannot be endangered by an inflexible adherence to the great principles of righteousness." They believed that a minister's acts were public property, and said they would not refrain from criticism. They declared that they respected ministers, but repudiated the "idea that they are the *church*—infallible in judgment,—or authorized to suppress any portion of God's truth." Finally, they resolved that "the aspect of the times indicates the necessity at an early day, of a convention of *lay members* of the M. E. Church, at some central point, to take into consideration the course proper to be pursued by them in order to secure the freedom of speech and an untrammelled ministry."³³

Zion's Watchman, the abolition organ, was viciously attacked from all sides. Conferences passed resolutions of condemnation; the editor was hailed before the Court of General Sessions in Lexington County, New York, but was acquitted; and four times was he compelled to stand trial before New England conference. In most instances, the prosecution was conducted by a member of New York conference. Perhaps the extraordinary liberality with which the *Watchman* was sent, gratis, to members of this conference may account for resolutions against Sunderland, the editor,

and Merritt, his associate. Sunderland declared that never had official Methodist papers supported him or his cause.³⁴

At least one other Church viewed the struggle of Methodist abolitionists and conservatives with the most intense interest, but there was no sympathy expressed for radicals. The *Boston Olive Branch* believed that the Methodist Church was resting on a mine which might explode at any moment. Church leaders who sought to stem the abolition tide, which seemed about to sweep everything before it, were very highly commended. Sunderland, Scott and other abolitionists were condemned for having caused all the trouble and for desiring a schism in the Church. It was even proclaimed that these men were seeking a division of the Church so that they might be bishops in the new organization. The writer said he would rather go to Russia than live under their administration. He claimed, concerning Sunderland's work in New England, that "his track was desolation," and that abolitionists were "scattering arrows, firebrands and death. We will hope and pray that such madness may never seize on Protestant Methodists."³⁵

The southern attitude towards Methodist abolitionists may be imagined. One southern correspondent advised the editor of *Zion's Watchman* to take care of poor whites in the North and leave negroes alone. He warned Sunderland not to come into southern territory with abolition missionaries. He asserted that political disunion was threatened unless the propaganda of abolitionists ceased.³⁵ Another writer urged the advisability of a separation of the South from the North. He also protested against the sending of "accursed fire brands," "infernal publications" and "hellish productions" to the South.³⁶ William Capers raised his voice against the abolitionism of such papers as *Zion's Herald* as tending to infidelity, and at the same time defended slavery because it promoted the welfare of slaves.³⁷ Capers was fully supported by the southern pro-slavery party. It was about this time that a meeting of slaveholders in Mississippi declared that any person who circulated abolition papers in the state was "justly worthy, in the sight of God and man, of IMMEDIATE DEATH." They also demanded that clergymen of the state take a stand on slavery. In answer to this ultimatum, a Methodist publication of the commonwealth

"announced that it would 'recognize the right of man to hold property in man.'" ³⁸

It has been abundantly proved that conservatives and southerners were not very considerate of the feelings of anti-slavery Methodists. But conservatives affirm that abolitionists also overstepped the bounds of propriety again and again in their zeal to destroy the power of their opponents. Clark, writing of the period just before the General Conference of 1840, says that "generally a cloud of lecturers hung about the path of Bishop Hedding, perverting and misrepresenting his acts and character." He adds that Hedding became "the butt of their ridicule; and in some of their lectures a mock slave-auction was enacted, and Bishop Hedding and his wife in burlesque sold as slaves." ³⁹

During these two years, the most persistent attempts had been made to crush abolitionists. The full power of the Church had been called out to destroy all opposition to the program which had been agreed upon at the General Conference of 1836. Official Methodist papers were always against abolitionism; conferences, with a few notable exceptions, supported the General Conference program; and bishops sought to weaken the abolitionists at every opportunity. They refused to permit anti-slavery motions to be voted upon, and attempted to send many an abolitionist to an undesirable appointment. When these methods failed, they resorted to trials and compelled refractory ministers to submit or had them expelled from their conferences. ⁴⁰ The most serious charge that can be brought against bishops and conferences, however, is not that they discountenanced abolitionism and supported either the conservative or the pro-slavery program, but that they denied to American citizens their constitutional rights of free speech and peaceable assembly. Undoubtedly, the abolitionists had greatly multiplied since 1836. Temporarily, the Church forces were highly successful; ultimately, conservative and pro-slavery partizans must fail because they denied the "satellites of Hedding" ⁴¹ and their followers the fundamental rights of American citizens. ⁴²

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1. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 181. Lovejoy was murdered, November 7, 1837.
 2. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 137-8.

3. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 150-53.
4. The Southern Christian Advocate printed an article on Lovejoy, the conclusion of which reads: "Mobs and riots are the veritable daughters of abolition. Fruits which no other tree produces, or can produce, in the slaveholding states. And whoever he be that has suffered in these states by them, he has suffered under a strong conviction in the public mind that he was an incendiary, plotting against the peace of society, and unworthy of the protection of the laws. A Martyr indeed!" (*The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 17, col. 1; February 2, 1838).
5. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, pp. 522-7. Hedding charged Sunderland "(1) with treating him in a scurrilous manner; (2) with publishing against him an injurious falsehood; (3) with publishing a false conjecture respecting the bishops; (4) with reporting a falsehood; and (5) with misrepresentation."
6. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 159.
7. The provisions of the "Plan" were as follows: (1) "Never attack an officer, clergyman, or private member" in public journals or in lectures. Everything was to be left to the regular procedure of the Church. It would be proper to have a "courteous investigation of principles and opinions." (2) Ministers must not leave their proper work to lecture on this or any other subject without the sanction of the proper authorities of the Church. (3) No paper was to be established ostensibly to aid the anti-slavery movement, which used a name peculiar to the Church. (4) They were opposed to anti-slavery organizations using names peculiar to Methodists. (5) Ministers and laymen might connect themselves with anti-slavery societies if such action were not contrary to the terms of this agreement. (6) Prayers might be offered for master and slave. "But we recommend that Apostolic language be used, so far as may be, in such devotions." (7) Preachers could read and explain the rules of the Church. (8) Members were granted the right to petition the General Conference on the subject of slavery. (9) "Nevertheless, in all circumstances relating to the above, we recommend to our preachers and people to exercise 'the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove.'" (*The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 123, cols. 1-2; August 3, 1838).
8. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 123, col. 2; August 3, 1838.
9. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, pp. 527-8.
10. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 157-8.
11. Clark, *The Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 528.
12. Allen and Pilsbury, *Methodism in Maine*, pp. 110-11.
13. Clark, *The Life and Times of Hedding*, pp. 528-30.
14. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, pp. 195-6.
15. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 123, col. 2; August 3, 1838.
16. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 156-7. The conference was divided into two hostile camps, of which the conservative was the stronger. The Rev. Guy Beckley, writing to *Zion's Herald*, declared that one of these conservatives asserted that "abolitionism was 'to take a nigger on your back, and run over the Advocate and Journal—the Bishops and General Conference, trampling them all under foot.'" (*The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 123, col. 3; August 3, 1838).
17. In regard to what happened at the Conference, the statements of Lee and Peck disagree. Peck says that Lee arrived and departed before the former came; Lee denies this assertion and insists that he made a speech representing all of the Americans. Lee also says that Peck and the other "orthodox" Methodists were there two days before he arrived and poisoned the minds of the Canadians against him.
18. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 162-6.
19. Peck, *The Life and Times of G. Peck*, p. 195.
20. Conable, *History of the Genesee Conference*, pp. 427-30.
21. Gregg, *Methodism within the Bounds of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, pp. 75-6. The resolution reads: "That while it (the conference) does disclaim all intention of interfering with any man's opinion's and while, as the Discipline says, 'We are as

much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery'; we judge it incompatible with the duties and obligations of Methodist preachers to spend their time in delivering abolition lectures, contributing to the getting up of abolition conventions, or in circulating abolition papers."

22. Gregg, *Methodism within the Bounds of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, pp. 76-8.

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80. The indictment was as follows:

"First, For saying that the proceedings of the New York Conference at its last session was unrighteous and unjust, and equal to a Roman inquisition, and he would as leave see the persecutions under the reign of Queen Mary revived as such proceedings, and that the devil was at the bottom of it.

"Second, For saying that in reference to his abolition movements he would lecture as much as he pleased, and circulate 'Zion's Watchman' as much as he could, and the conference might help itself if it could.

"Third, For making exertions in favor of an abolition meeting in Monroe Village, to the injury of the Methodist society in that place, although earnestly requested not to do so.

"Fourth, For desecrating the Sabbath by delivering abolition lectures thereon."

The proceedings of Erie conference were very displeasing to many laymen of the conference, but few severed their connection with the Church at that time. Barris withdrew from the Church after the adjournment of conference, as did Isaac Winans. These, together with Ensign Hill and Benjamin Preston, organized the "Congregational Consociation." When that organization fell to pieces, some of the members united with the Wesleyan Methodists. (*Ibid.*, pp. 96-8. Cf. Fradenburgh, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, pp. 502-4) The "Congregational Consociation" was probably similar to the Congregational Church, but, so far as is known, there was no connection between them.

24. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 139.

25. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 91, col. 2; June 8, 1838. Cf. Faulkner, *The Methodists*, p. 166. Garrison called the conference a "popish conclave" and "recreants to the cause of God and humanity," and censured unsparingly those who had basely forsaken the abolitionists. He declared that there would be "no rest or peace for the wicked, whether ecclesiastical or civil despots."

26. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 91, col. 2; June 8, 1838.

27. Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, pp. 194, 197-9. Matlack states that the abolitionists did not number a single itinerant minister in their ranks. "When *Zion's Watchman* was first published and sent gratis to many of the northern preachers, a few of this class in this State professed to be abolitionists, and blustered a little in its support, but at their annual conference of 1838, the anti-abolition screws were brought to bear upon them, and they basely submitted, and that has been the last of the abolition in this body of ministers. From that day to this (1849), not one member of the Michigan Annual Conference of the M. E. Church has been known, in any public manner, to identify himself with the abolitionists of this State."

28. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 179-88.

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 190-91.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-14. Lee gives many examples of the work of mobs and their refusal to permit free discussion if they could prevent it. Many times they showed themselves very cowardly when face to face with Lee. (*Ibid.*, pp. 224-5.)

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 217-18.

32. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 201.

33. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 118, cols. 4-5; July 27, 1838.

34. *Zion's Watchman*, Volume IV, p. 206, col. 4; December 28, 1839. Said Sunderland: "We say, during the whole of this time, not a single Methodist E. paper has attempted to advocate our cause, or expressed, so far as we know, a word of sympathy for the paper that has been the object of such

AN EXTRAORDINARY AMOUNT OF ECCLESIASTICAL CENSURE AND OPPOSITION!"

35. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII., p. 73, col 1; May 11, 1838.
36. *Ibid.*, p. 74, col. 4. The extract is taken from the *Emancipator*: "You will please do us the particular favor to send no more of your accursed firebrands to this place. Brother Roach has sent several of your infernal publications back to you; so that you must know his wish on the subject. Brother Mont. Oldham has returned several of these hellish productions." The *Emancipator* commented: "The anxiety of such men to dissolve the Union reminds us of the anxiety of the drunkard who has the horrors, to die. They feel so bad, that they don't consider what will be their condition after a change."
37. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 203.
38. Jay, *Miscellaneous Writings on Slavery*, p. 412.
39. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 533. While it is a fact that no abolitionist, so far as I am aware, admits doing anything of this kind, yet it is not difficult to believe that such indignities were perpetrated.
40. It seems impossible that northern conferences would have been so zealous against abolitionists had it not been for the active support of the bishops. For an example of the influence of a bishop on a conference, see *supra*, p. 83.
41. The phrase was suggested by a student, Miss Nelle Jones.
42. It is significant that the attempt to deny free speech and the right of assembly to Methodist abolitionists came at the same time that a similar attempt was made to deprive the people of the country of the right to petition Congress against slavery. (See Hart, *Slavery and Abolition*, pp. 270-71).

The effect of slavery on the churches is set forth by a keen observer from the Halcyon Church as follows: "And moreover, slavery in southern churches exerts a deleterious influence upon those connected with them in the north, and prevents the latter from bearing testimony against it, for fear of division: pro-slavery clergymen in both sections, using their moral power and talents, to prove it a divine institution; attempting to make it identical with Jewish servitude, and sanctioned by Apostolic precept. All these and many other reasons were assigned by the abolitionists to justify agitating the subject in free States." (Parker, *Autobiography*, p. 161). He says that the Methodists in an earlier time "were like all new sects; persecuted by the more popular churches; but now they are 'rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing.'" (*Ibid.*, p. 47). The Halcyon Church was a small band in Ohio with tenets similar to those of the Unitarian Church.

CHAPTER VIII

THE METHODIST JUGGERNAUT

Months before the delegates assembled at Baltimore, it was apparent to all competent observers that there would be a struggle on the slavery issue in the General Conference of 1840. Previous to the Conference, two very important considerations were before annual conferences:¹ (1) the proposal to change the General Rule on Slavery; and (2) the choice of delegates to the General Conference. Results in both instances indicated the sentiment of conferences and the Church as a whole, perhaps more accurately than any other action that was taken.

In 1838, New England conference proposed to change the Rule on Slavery so that it would forbid "*The buying or selling; or holding men, women or children as slaves, under any circumstances, or giving them away unless on purpose to free them.*" The bishops were requested to present the resolution to all the conferences for their concurrence.² New Hampshire conference approved the proposed change,³ but all other northern as well as southern conferences rejected it. In fact, only two conferences - Genesee⁴ and Ohio⁵ - gave more than five votes in favor of the resolution. Ohio conference non-concurred by a vote of 130 to 10,⁵ while the equally reactionary Erie conference rejected the change, 86 to 3.⁶

In 1838, Kentucky conference declared their opposition to the change of the Rule suggested by New England conference. Bishop Waugh asserted that, while he was opposed to slavery, he was also opposed to abolitionism and the resolution under consideration because he believed it to be "revolutionary and injurious." He rebuked New England conference as he submitted the resolution, and expressed the opinion that "the *union* of the Church would be imperilled."⁷ Undoubtedly, conferences further south would have agreed to the statement of Dr. Capers, in the *Southern Christian Advocate*, when he said that the change

proposed by northern abolitionists was an "offensive alteration of our General Rule. It is very doubtful, to our minds, though we would not interfere with our General Rules, whether it is not absolutely necessary for the southern portion of the Church to expunge every word of Section X., Part 2."⁸

Southern conferences could be depended upon to send anti-abolition delegates to the General Conference of 1840. In northern conferences there was some opposition to the conservative party, but in only two conferences — New England and New Hampshire — were anti-slavery delegations sent to Baltimore. So strong was the opposition to abolitionists that Orange Scott and other radicals predicted that the General Conference would cut off abolition conferences, as well as members of the General Conference who were of the anti-slavery party. Scott wrote: "I have no expectation that the Church will all remain together after the next General Conference. There will either be a split between the North and South, or such measures will be adopted as will render it *inconvenient* and *inconsistent* for the abolitionists to remain in the Church."⁹ That the fears of abolitionists were not groundless is demonstrated by the fact that Fisk and Bangs asserted the right of the General Conference to cut off an annual conference from the Church.¹⁰ The anti-slavery party insisted that if such a separation were decreed, the blame would rest with pro-slavery and conservative leaders rather than with abolitionists.¹⁰

At the very beginning of the General Conference, two addresses immediately made the slavery issue of paramount interest. In their Quadrennial Address, the bishops singled out the New England conferences for censure because of their radicalism, and commended the conservative conferences. It was asserted that many ministers who were personally abolitionists refused to approve the radical program because they "*clearly perceived that the success of the measures would result in the division of the Church.*" It was held that the position of the Church on this question was that of the founders of American Methodism, and that exceptions had always been made in case of a slaveholder who was unable to free his slaves because of the laws of the state in which he resided. The bishops advised that

no change in the General Rule on Slavery be made, and appealed to the members of the Conference to consider the nation's welfare and stop the agitation of the slavery question. They asked for an interpretation of the rule so that uniformity might result in all sections of the country; and they also requested the Conference to define the rights of bishops in annual conferences.¹¹

Another important address at the beginning of the Conference was that of Dr. Watson, who represented the British Wesleyan Methodist Conference. In this document the British Church asked that the General Conference continue to be anti-slavery.¹² The reply of the Conference was practically the same as the statement of the bishops. They closed, however, by quoting the instructions of the English Methodist Missionary Society to its workers in the West Indies before slavery was abolished. English missionaries were told that their only business was to "promote the moral and religious improvement of the slaves" without regard to "their civil condition." The vote for adoption was 114 to 18.¹³

The counter-attack of abolitionists began on May 2 when Orange Scott presented the first anti-slavery petition. Immediately there was a call for the appointment of a committee to whom all such memorials should be referred. Of the twenty-eight members, only four were abolitionists.¹⁴ During the Conference, Scott presented petitions from New England conference, New York City, and some thirty other places. That from New York City threw the delegates into the greatest excitement. It was signed by eleven hundred fifty-four members of the Methodist Church of that city. Dr. Bangs immediately started an investigation and even sent the petition to New York, where a committee of thirty conservatives made a canvas and reported that the memorial contained many frauds and forgeries, and that eight hundred thirteen signers were women.¹⁵ The attempt seems to have been made to prove that Scott was untrustworthy, but he immediately disavowed all intention to deceive, and declared that he was given the petition by one whom he thought could be trusted. He affirmed that while some of the names might not be those of members, yet probably most of them were and these ought not to be discarded with the rest. Scott declared that if there were fraud and corruption connected

with the New York petition he wanted it fully known, and moved that all documents bearing on the question at issue be published in the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. The Bishop ruled that the motion was not in order and refused to put it to a vote.¹⁶

Bangs hoped that the "foul stigma" against the good name of New York had been removed and asked that the document which Scott had presented might be referred to the Committee on Slavery. William Smith moved that the report on slavery be re-committed because of the morning's disclosures so that the committee might "impart a *different complexion* to that report." An attempt on the part of Scott to get possession of the New York petition failed, Smith assigning as a reason that Scott could not be trusted with it. Pierce of Georgia urged the expulsion of Scott from the General Conference.¹⁷

The Committee on Slavery reported on May 14 and asked that they be discharged from the consideration of the question referred to them, but the request was denied. Five days later the Committee, of which Nathan Bangs was chairman, made the following report as the judgment of the Conference:

"1st. That it is inexpedient to express any opinion, or to adopt any measure to control or modify slavery as it exists in the United States, other than those now recognized in our book of Discipline.

"2d. That the General Conference, in its legislative capacity, has no authority to expound the general rules of the Discipline.

"3d. That it is to be regretted that annual conferences have, in some instances, expressed conflicting opinions on the item of slavery in the general rules, and on the subject generally, and considering the great delicacy of this subject, as well as the necessity of union among ourselves, it is the will of the General Conference that the annual conferences, in their action upon this subject in the future, should closely adhere to the language of the Discipline as it now stands."¹⁸

A spirited debate followed the introduction of this report. Even the hostile *Christian Advocate and Journal* acknowledged that Scott presented his side of the case with great ability and power. Likewise, leading southerners eloquently set forth their position. But conservatives met with the

scorn, not only of abolitionists but also of pro-slavery delegates. So lukewarm were most northern delegates that Smith of Virginia demanded that they go on record as to whether slavery was moral evil. He affirmed that if it were, Scott was right and that he would defend him. While the Conference was undoubtedly favorable to the sentiments expressed by the Committee, no motion to adopt the report seems to have been carried.¹⁹

As a result of the refusal of New England conference to condemn Scott and Sunderland at the request of Bishop Hedding, the latter reported his grievance to the General Conference. These two abolitionists were accused of ill-treating the bishop in the New England conferences, and through the columns of *Zion's Watchman*. The case was, on motion of Nathan Bangs, referred to a special committee of five, at least three of whom were northern men, and all friendly to the course of the bishops. Two weeks later, the committee reported that everything had been "amicably settled."²⁰

The report of the Committee on Itinerancy²¹ was presented a few days after the settlement between Hedding and the abolitionists. Scott, Sunderland and New England conference were severely handled. Horton, of New England conference, moved that this section be tabled, but the motion was lost. On the following day, however, the whole preamble, in which New England conference was censured, was stricken out. This may have been due to the proposal of Dodge that the report be amended so that exception would be taken to the resolution of Georgia conference that slavery was not a moral evil. A debate ensued, and his motion was, as a matter of course, tabled. The administration of the bishops during the previous four years was heartily commended. In connection with the request of the bishops that their rights in annual conferences be defined, the Committee recommended that they be given absolute power to make any decision, subject only to the will of the General Conference. They might even adjourn an annual conference whenever they pleased. This extraordinary grant of power was made by a vote of 98 to 5.²²

Two special cases engaged the attention of the General Conference. The first was that of Rev. Silas Comfort of Missouri conference. He was charged with mal-administra-

tion because, in a church trial, he had received the testimony of a negro. He had been convicted by Missouri conference and, on appeal, his case came before the General Conference. Bishop Soule introduced resolutions in which it was asserted that the Conference were of the opinion that the mistakes of Comfort were simply errors of judgment, and advised that his character be passed and that the decision of Missouri conference be reversed. These resolutions were agreed to, 97 to 27.²³ May 18, I. A. Few proposed a resolution which read: "Resolved, That it is inexpedient and unjustifiable, for preachers among us, to permit colored persons to give testimony against white persons, in any State where they are denied that privilege in trials at law." The adoption of this resolution, by a vote of 74 to 46,²³ drew a protest from the negroes in Baltimore churches,²⁴ but a statement of Bishop Soule seems to have satisfied them.²⁵

The second case was that of Westmoreland district of Baltimore conference. This district was in Virginia and the annual conference had refused to elect to ordination local preachers from that section simply because they were slaveholders. A special committee, of which H. B. Bascom²⁶ was a member, reviewed the case and set forth the peculiar conditions in Virginia which did not permit emancipation except in very rare instances. They declared that the Discipline protected ministers under such conditions.²⁷ The committee proposed a resolution, which was readily adopted, that the holding of slaves in a southern state constituted "no legal barrier to the election or ordination of ministers to the various grades of office known in the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, and cannot, therefore, be considered as operating any forfeiture of right in view of such election and ordination."²⁸

One incident during this General Conference shows the spirit of anti-slavery delegates. Delegates from Mississippi conference appealed for funds for the Methodist church at Natchez which had been partially destroyed by a storm. In response, members of the Conference contributed about one thousand dollars to aid in the restoration of the building. But abolitionists refused to assist in this enterprise lest they should appear to be supporting slavery. Cartwright says that this demonstrated "a wrong and fanatical spirit" on their

part, and added that "their consciences, for solidity and rotundity, very much resembled a ram's horn."²⁹

One of the most interesting and important items of business in any General Conference is the election of bishops. In 1840, the Committee on Episcopacy recommended the election of two new bishops. The majority of the delegates were strongly in favor of the southern viewpoint that slavery should be no bar to any office in the Church, while Scott and his followers were opposed to the election of a slaveholder to any office in the gift of the Conference or even to membership in the Church. Cartwright feared that this election would cause a further struggle between the various factions. With the help of conservatives, he was able to defeat the plan to elect bishops at that General Conference. Cartwright credits his work with having prevented a division of the Church in 1840 rather than in 1844.³⁰

The action of the Conference on slavery, together with the "pastoral Address" furnished the rules by which bishops, conferences and people were to be guided for the ensuing four years. This document, which was written by George Peck, strongly advised ministers and laymen — and the advice was equivalent to a command — to leave the anti-slavery controversy entirely alone.³¹ The Conference rejoiced that Methodists were so strongly in favor of remaining "one and indissoluble." It was admitted that some leaders had entered into controversies over slavery but it was asserted that the people were largely faithful to the Church. They affirmed that there seemed "far less occasion to fear from the causes of dissension than there was at the last meeting of this conference. Indeed, brethren, we have no doubt but if we all continue to 'walk by the same rule, and to mind the same things,' in which in the order of God we have been instructed, 'the gates of hell shall not prevail against us,' and the enemy who would divide and scatter, in order to destroy us, will be disappointed." The action of the Conference was referred to as indicating the sentiment of the nation on that subject.³²

The General Conference of 1840 marks the end of an era in Methodist history. In the strenuous controversy which had begun in 1831, those who favored abolitionism had attempted by a process of education, radical though it may have been, to change the thinking of the Methodist Episcopal

Church on the question of slavery. Until 1840 they had fervently hoped that each General Conference would approve their action. It was too much to expect such a change in 1832; in 1836 abolitionists were met with repression; and in 1840, northern radicals considered their case hopeless. For some radicals it meant submission to the constituted authorities of the Church, even though they must stifle their consciences; to others, a break with the Church seemed the only possible escape. The disappointment of abolitionists may be imagined. Decisions had been made by the Conference, barring the testimony of negroes in church trials in the South; forbidding a southern annual conference to deny the advancement of ministers because they were slaveholders; and giving bishops absolute power for four years in the administration of annual conferences. To the South, the results of the General Conference must have seemed the fulfillment of the rashest dreams of their leaders; to time-serving compromisers it probably appeared that their policy had wrought the salvation of the Church; to abolitionists it was a period of gloom. Both southerners and abolitionists had shown the courage of their convictions; the compromisers had thrown their full strength against the abolitionists, and the theories of the South were accepted as the will and law of the Church. If slavery were triumphant in 1836, it was supremely so in 1840.

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1. The usual debates on slavery were held, but the subject matter was substantially the same as has been considered in previous chapters.
 2. *The Liberator*, Volume VIII, p. 123, cols. 1-3; August 3, 1838. The resolutions were again adopted in 1839, by a vote of 80 to 31. (Mudge, *History of the New England Conference*, pp. 286-8).
 3. Clark, *The Life and Times of Bishop Hedding*, pp. 528-30.
 4. Mudge, *The History of the New England Conference*, p. 288.
 5. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume VI, p. 94, cols. 4-5; October 4, 1839.
 6. Gregg, *The History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II, pp. 101-3.
 7. Redford, *Western Cavaliers*, pp. 268-9.
 8. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 198.
 9. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 160-64.
 10. *Ibid.*, pp. 155-6.
 11. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 20-24. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 50-52.
 12. Their statement indicated the English Methodist desire rather than actual fact. The Church had not been anti-slavery.
 13. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 24-6.
 14. Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, p. 206.
 15. Scott must have been considerably embarrassed because of his attitude on women's rights.
 16. If the petition were as represented by conservatives, and the latter were standing on unassailable ground it seems strange that they should be unwilling to publish the documents.

17. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 166-73. Cf. Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, p. 206.
18. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, p. 173. A minority report was presented by abolition members of the committee but the Conference refused to receive it. (*Ibid.*, p. 174).
19. Smith said: "We, at the South, do not believe slavery a moral evil. If you from the free States think with us, say so. But if you think it is a moral evil, hands off that brother" (Scott). (Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, p. 206).
20. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 175-6. No suggestion has been found as to what the settlement really was.
21. This committee dealt with exceptions taken to the administration of the bishops in the various conferences.
22. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 176-80.
23. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume II, pp. 60 and 109. Cf. Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, pp. 215-16; and Pullen, *Blast of a Trumpet in Zion*, p. 7.
24. Matlack, *History of American Slavery and Methodism*, pp. 218-20.
25. *Journals of the General Conference*, Volume II, p. 109.
26. Bascom, who was considered a very brilliant preacher, later became a bishop of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South.
27. The address of the bishops at the beginning of the Conference contained the same opinion.
28. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 27-9. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 55-7.
29. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, pp. 375-6.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 373-4.
31. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 26. See also, Peck, *The Life and Times of G. Peck*, p. 230.
32. *The Methodist Magazine and Quarterly Review*, Volume XXII. (New Series, Volume XI,) pp. 352-3; Year 1840. It is my opinion that the General Conference misjudged the situation. The indications were that the laity were more anti-slavery than the ministers. The sentiment expressed at the General Conference of 1844 supports me.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHANGING TIDE

The General Conference decisions of 1840 were responsible for momentous changes in Methodism's attitude towards slavery. But for the succeeding three years the dominant note of annual conferences was submission to ecclesiastical authority. New England conference seems to have furnished the only excitement for the first year. Sunderland was convicted on the charge that "he had behaved inconsistently with the character of a Christian minister." It was the bishop's plan to transfer the rebel to New York conference, where abolitionists were very few in number, and where his conviction and expulsion from the conference would be more certain. Sunderland saved himself by obtaining a location. Neither Scott nor Sunderland received much sympathy from Garrison, who declared that they had received their proper punishment for abandoning him in former years.¹

No more radical were the conferences of 1841. At least six of them said nothing at all against slavery.² Kentucky conference commended the American Colonization Society, but apparently nothing was done to bring about universal emancipation.³ In only two conferences does there seem to have been even the semblance of a struggle. Pittsburgh conference tried and suspended one member for agitating the slavery question. Elliott says that the conference also took action on slaveholding. They treated as "brethren those who were involuntary slaveholders, but refused to fellowship all others." Concerning this latter class, the ministers were of the opinion that there were "few of this description in the pale of the Methodist Episcopal Church, even at the extreme south." Elliott also affirms that abolitionists caused all the trouble in this conference. He added: "A few months will bring a calm of entire peace to the entire Church within the bounds of the Pittsburg conference."⁴ In Erie conference there was a sharp contest between abolitionists and conservatives, but the struggle soon resulted

in favor of the latter. Elliott predicted this result for the whole Church.⁴

In 1842 the attempt was again made to maintain the *status quo*. Philadelphia conference had no report on slavery.⁵ Bishop Hedding presided over six conferences and, if his biographer may be trusted, he was completely satisfied with the action of each conference on slavery and abolitionism.⁶ As in 1841, so in 1842 there were two conferences in which radicalism showed itself. In New Hampshire conference Hedding put forth the doctrine that a bishop could transfer ministers from one conference to another to "correct" them. An abolitionist moved that, since southern ministers were not executing the Discipline in regard to slavery, they should be transferred to northern conferences. The bishop replied that if southern ministers were brought north, northern preachers must be transferred to southern conferences. He therefore proposed that the mover of the resolution be sent to New Orleans, where they greatly needed a pastor. The expected happened. The abolitionist's ardor rapidly waned as he considered the prospect of proclaiming his doctrines to slaveholders. By an almost unanimous vote, the resolution was indefinitely postponed.⁷ Only Providence conference succeeded in passing resolutions which favored the destruction of slavery and the elimination of "the pollution" of this great evil from the Church.⁸

Channing and other writers charged that American churches were throwing their influence, for the most part, on the side of those who apologized for slavery.⁹ This was true of the Methodist Church. Abolitionism had been driven under ground. Radicals had fought against the forces of slavery, and the equally formidable power of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which had been brought to bear upon them and, apparently, the battle had ended disastrously for the anti-slavery cause. The statement of Bennett that the action of the General Conference on colored testimony in church trials "sent a thrill of indignation far and wide, and awoke many to a realization of the growing evil that had crept into our Zion,"¹⁰ seems to have little basis in fact, prior to 1843, so far as Church officials were concerned.

Evidences of revolt were not lacking. Unofficial Methodist publications sought to inform the people in regard to the evils of slavery and the "despotism" of the Church. In

1841, the *New England Christian Advocate*, with Luther Lee as editor, began publication at Lowell, Massachusetts. Orange Scott heartily commended this paper and declared that the four anti-slavery conferences of New England needed more than one Methodist anti-slavery organ.¹¹ Lee sought to arouse the North with accounts of slavery in the South.¹² *Zion's Herald* commended two men for their activities in behalf of freedom. Governor Seward was praised because he refused to surrender to the governor of Georgia, three men who were charged with having stolen or liberated slaves.¹³ John Quincy Adams, who was at that time in the House of Representatives, was acclaimed because of his brave stand against those who wished to deny the people the right to petition Congress.¹⁴

That which stirred abolitionists to the highest pitch of excitement was the General Conference action on colored testimony, and the power of the bishops, and the results of these resolutions in annual conferences. *Zion's Herald* condemned unsparingly the General Conference action on colored testimony.¹⁵ But the most radical of Methodist papers seems to have been the *Utica Wesleyan Methodist*. The editor censure impartially both General Conference resolutions. It was held that despotism in the Church had been developing ever since the beginning of the anti-slavery struggle. This was especially noticeable in every section of the country where effectual methods for ridding the Church and Nation of slavery had been suggested. As has already been narrated, bishops, conferences and official papers had shown their arbitrary tendency by refusing abolitionists the right of free speech and the privilege of stating their side of the controversy in official papers. The final and crowning achievement of the Church had been the decision of the General Conference on colored testimony.¹⁶

Zion's Watchman ridiculed the idea that slavery could be driven from the Methodist Church, and pointed to the records for the years following the General Conference of 1836 as proof of the failure of the Church. Even the professedly abolition conferences of New England had been gagged and preachers compelled to submit to the bishops or withdraw from the Church. So they professed fidelity to the Church and the highest regard for the episcopacy which was "ruling them as with a rod of iron." The editor declared that he

had ceased to hope that the Church, as such, would do anything to destroy slavery, and cited in proof Hedding's statement that abolitionists could be scattered among other conferences where they would be helpless.¹⁷

It is apparent from the statement of the *Utica Wesleyan Methodist* that, in the minds of abolitionists, the arbitrary rule of officials was closely associated with the suppression of the anti-slavery party. It was claimed that bishops had it in their power to appoint to office whomsoever they desired. They believed that bishops, presiding elders and preachers were pro-slavery men. Bishops were able to accomplish the suppression of abolitionists by noticing who belonged to the anti-slavery party, and then appointing their opponents to the more lucrative positions. Presiding elders and the most prominent preachers were all of the conservative party, and abolitionists were compelled to serve under these favorites. The result was that preachers were compelled to oppose radicalism or have their influence practically nullified.¹⁸

Abolitionists sought to arouse as much as possible the anti-slavery sentiment among Methodists. In New England, Elliott's observation is that the Church and particularly the bishops and preachers were pronounced pro-slavery by ultra-abolitionists. At every opportunity the latter discussed slavery and sought to keep the Church in a turmoil.¹⁹ In two directions, at least, radicals accomplished little, except to show that Methodism was opposed to abolitionists. The two official papers refused to print the statements of radicals. Both the *Christian Advocate and Journal* and the *Western Christian Advocate* took the position that they had no right to oppose the will of the General Conference. In answer to subscribers who refused to renew their subscriptions because he would not discuss the existence of slavery in the Methodist Church, the editor of the latter paper asserted that the decision had been made by the General Conference and the people should obey it. But the editor opposed abolitionists for personal reasons. He declared that they were so divided that, no matter which party he joined, he would be condemned by other groups of radicals. He condemned the anti-slavery party because their program was revolutionary and had a "bad effect on the piety of those who espouse it." Further, he feared the evil results of agitation on the work among the slaves.²⁰

In view of the opposition which confronted them in 1842, ultra-abolitionists of the Methodist Church followed the only possible course. Mention has already been made of ministers who withdrew from the Methodist Episcopal Church.²¹ These were only the forerunners of a movement which thoroughly alarmed reactionaries of the Church. Secessions had begun in Ohio by 1839, and in Michigan and New York conferences within a year after the General Conference of 1840.²² Most of the abolitionists, however, had remained in the Church, hoping that the General Conference of that year "would do something to clear the skirts of the church from the blood of slavery." But by 1842 opinion was rapidly changing. *Zion's Watchman* believed that all who considered it their duty should withdraw from the Church and form a new organization.²³ Many of these did organize as "Wesleyan Methodists."²²

As early as 1841 Orange Scott and Luther Lee had seriously contemplated withdrawal from the Church.²⁴ But Scott's health failed and the proposed secession languished for lack of a leader.²⁵ During the years 1841 and 1842 Scott received many requests to lead in the establishment of a new organization. In answer to this persistent demand, he wrote, September 2, 1842, that he had decided to leave the Methodist Episcopal Church and stand for "a new anti-slavery, anti-intemperance, anti-everything wrong, church organization."²⁶ Scott's action was heartily approved by the venerable Seth Sprague,²⁷ who called upon his fellow-members to throw off "the abominable despotism of Methodist Episcopacy, and no longer sustain any institution that is steeped in blood and tears."²⁸ Finally, he announced his own withdrawal from the Church.²⁹

In October, 1842, it was rumored that secessionists were about to form a new Church.³⁰ The rumor was confirmed by a meeting at Albany, New York, November 2 and 3, for the purpose of starting the organization. Five ministers and several laymen were present.³¹ Luther Lee was not informed of the movement until after this initial meeting. For some unknown reason, Scott feared that he might be opposed to some features of the plan and desired to place his statement before the public before critics could destroy his program.³²

A second meeting to perfect the organization of the new Church was held, February 1, 1843, at Andover, Massachu-

setts. Out of this grew a General Convention, which met at Utica, New York, May 31, of the same year. Nearly one hundred preachers were present. At this convention the delegates proposed many ideas as "fundamental," but four principles were accepted: (1) No Slaveholding. The rule of their Discipline forbade "The buying or selling of men, women or children, with an intention to enslave them, or holding them as slaves; or claiming that it is right to do so."³³ (2) They decided to have no bishops. (3) The Church was for temperance. This action was especially significant because the Methodist Episcopal Church was supposed to have evaded the temperance issue. (4) After an exciting debate, the Convention decided against lodges and other secret societies. This last decision cost the new Church many members.³⁴ Thus was begun the "Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America," or, as it was often called in derision, the "Scottite" church.

That the secessions were alarming is indicated by the report that one hundred fifty ministers and from six to eight thousand members had withdrawn from the Methodist Episcopal Church on account of slavery and joined with other abolitionists to strengthen the Wesleyan organization.³⁵ All Liberty Party editors who were members of the Methodist Episcopal Church — Smith, Colby and Beckley — joined the new Church.³⁶

The first result of the secession movement was an attempt to bribe Luther Lee. The Boston Preachers' Meeting authorized one of their number to write him as follows: "If your principles and convictions of right will allow you to do so, I know what I say when I tell you that you shall have any position in the Church you desire if you will come out and wield your vigorous pen against secession."³⁷

But Lee was not so easily bought, and determined to act with the seceders. His reasons for so drastic an action may be accepted as those of abolitionists generally. First, he declared that slavery was a great evil. Second, he said that the Methodist Episcopal Church "appeared to indorse, . . . defend and maintain slavery as it existed in the Church, while" he "was unable to see any essential moral difference between slavery in the Church and slavery out of the Church." He presented as his proof that ministers were allowed to say slavery was morally right, without condemnation; while abo-

litionists were not permitted to denounce the sinfulness of slavery without impairing their ministerial character. Further, in annual conferences, bishops showed that the Church was against abolitionism by permitting a vote on resolutions justifying slavery and condemning abolitionists, but refusing to permit any action on a motion in which slavery was condemned as a sin. He also condemned the General Conference of 1836 for censuring the two abolitionists who spoke at the anti-slavery meeting in Cincinnati, and refusing to act against slavery.

The General Conference of 1840, according to Lee, deserved an even greater amount of censure, for not only were three northern conferences condemned, and Georgia conference, which had stood for slavery, given the approval of that body, but the "colored testimony resolution" was adopted as the will of the Church — "an act which was undeniably in the interest of slavery, and was antichristian, and not to be justified on moral ground. This involved the whole Church in the disgrace and guilt of denying to a class of Christians the rights of membership in the Church." The Church also permitted both ministers and laymen to keep slaves but "waged what was intended to be an exterminating war upon abolitionism and abolitionists, intending to silence or drive them out of the Church."³⁸

Lee also protested against the rule of bishops and presiding elders, and declared that their whole policy was based upon the idea that abolitionists must be suppressed. He affirmed — and his statement has been amply proved — that abolitionists were sent to undesirable charges, while an abolition church was given to an "orthodox" minister "to annoy and wear them out." He cited one instance in which a church asked for a certain anti-slavery preacher, then for one out of five whom they named, then to be left without a minister, and finally that the bishop would send any preacher except one man whom they did not want. From the last proposal the people got action, for the preacher against whom they had protested was sent to them. The congregation refused to accept the preacher, the latter pronounced them all expelled from the Church, and the minister was upheld by another bishop who declared: "There is energy in Methodism." Lee contended that the action of officials had crippled the anti-slavery movement.³⁹

Mutual recrimination was the order of the hour. *Zion's Herald* condemned the new movement for the establishment of another Church as work in the dark.⁴⁰ The *Christian Advocate and Journal* proclaimed that Luther Lee was "a metaphysical tadpole, always wiggling to stir up the muddy waters of strife."⁴¹ The *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, after censuring those members "who clandestinely co-operate with the seceders in their efforts to destroy" the Methodist Church, asserted that Scott approved their work and would "conceal whatever of hypocrisy said members may please to practice."⁴² William Hosmer, editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate*, affirmed that certain abolitionists were "morally and mentally deficient; and hence totally incapable of conducting a process of thought." He also maintained that the radicalism of abolitionists was producing discord and that they thus became "a scourge and a burlesque to common sense."⁴³ And Peter Cartwright, writing at a later time of this excitement, expressed the prevailing contempt of the Methodist Episcopal Church for this movement when he said that "the fog and smoke of run-mad clerical abolitionism ended in a feeble secession under O. Scott & Co., and a few of the same cloth and kidney."⁴⁴

Abolitionists repaid their traducers in kind. The official publication of the Wesleyans was "The True Wesleyan," which had for its motto "First Pure, then Peaceable."⁴⁵ This paper published everything of interest in building up the new Church at the expense of the old organization, a favorite heading being "The glorious work of secession goes on."⁴⁶ Of Dr. Bond, editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal*, the Wesleyan editor said that he was "so much below the common standard of Christian courtesy in all his assaults upon the Wesleyans," and copied "so closely in style, the blackguardism of the grog shop," that it was considered unnecessary to reply to him.⁴⁷

That which the agitation of a decade had failed to accomplish, the secession of those who formed the Wesleyan Methodist Church brought to pass. For the policy of the Methodist Episcopal Church changed immediately when the secession movement began to gather momentum.⁴⁸ Even before the Utica Convention was held, three "orthodox" Methodist conventions were called — one at Boston, one at Hallowell, Maine, and the third at Claremont, New Hamp-

shire. At Boston, resolutions were adopted against slavery,⁴⁹ while at Hallowell, the delegates asserted that "every slaveholder is a sinner and ought not to be admitted to the pulpit or communion." They declared that they had reliable evidence to show that "there were within the Methodist Episcopal Church 200 travelling ministers holding 1600 slaves, about 1000 local preachers holding 10,000, and about 25,000 members holding 207,900" slaves.⁵⁰

The change in the policy of the Church is most clearly seen in the action of bishops and annual conferences. No bishop — not even Hedding⁵¹ — attempted to obstruct any resolution on the sinfulness of slavery and slaveholding. "All were free to talk against slavery; lips which had always been closed, or opened only to execrate abolition and traduce abolitionists, were now opened wide to denounce slavery, and one wild anti-slavery shout was heard, which nearly drowned the vociferations of the few seceders."⁵² And yet the action of these conferences was a complete reversal of that permitted by the General Conference of 1840.

In New England conference, petitions were sent out to be signed by members of the Church, which asked for three things: (1) that the next General Conference admit colored testimony; (2) that slaveholders should not be elected bishops; and (3) that the church be freed from the evil of slavery.⁵³ One of the most significant and dramatic incidents of this conference was the appearance of Dr. Bond at the anti-slavery meeting. While New England conference refused to follow Scott and Sunderland into the Wesleyan Church, yet the conference anti-slavery society pledged its support to the Massachusetts Abolition Society and paid in cash over one hundred dollars to aid in its work.⁵⁴ Other New England conferences passed resolutions of similar import.⁵⁵

Two conferences — Genesee and New York — proposed certain changes in the General Rule on Slavery. The former desired a revision of the rule so that no slaveholder could be a member of the Church if it were possible to free his slaves.⁵⁶ New York conference asked for the restoration of the early form of the rule.⁵⁷ With the Genesee proposal, Erie conference refused to agree by a vote of 61 to 33, but the change suggested by New York conference was adopted unanimously.⁵⁸ Further south, the proposed changes do

not seem to have met with a favorable reception. While Baltimore conference, in 1843 and 1844, required some members to free their slaves and suspended F. A. Harding until he should agree to manumit some slaves which belonged to him and his wife, they refused to agree to any change of the rule on slavery.⁵⁹ Similar action was taken by South Carolina conference against the northern proposals.⁶⁰

To the South, northern conferences seemed very radical. Dr. Bond was looked upon with suspicion. One incident which caused friction between the two sections was the attempt on the part of slaveholders in Maryland to pass laws which would either drive free blacks from the state or reduce them to servitude. Methodists thereupon took action against the proposed law.⁶¹ The slaveholders' scheme was condemned by Bond as unsparingly as abolitionism had previously been.⁶² This notice of the southern "institution" by a notoriously conservative Methodist paper excited no little alarm in the South. One writer asserted that such a discussion "in *that paper* must close all access to the colored people of the south, and send home our missionaries, or compel the southern Church, from a love of souls, to a separation."⁶³ It was also held that the northern paper would not circulate in the South when it agitated "questions so justly considered *dangerous*."⁶³

The suggestion that the *Christian Advocate and Journal* would not circulate in the South if it attacked slaveholders may have been responsible for an article by Dr. Bond.⁶⁴ Two propositions were discussed: (1) whether or not the General Conference should exclude all slaveholders from the Church, under all circumstances; and (2) if it were granted that there were instances in which slavery was justified, could a rule be made which would punish the guilty and spare exempt cases?

Both propositions were answered in the negative. It was held that there was no justification in the Scriptures for secession on account of slavery, or for a rule destroying slavery in the Church, and that the work among slaves would be effectually stopped if such a rule were enacted. Besides, none of the larger Churches had such a rule — not even the British Wesleyan Church, which tolerated slavery until the time of general emancipation. He believed that the Church should not exclude slaveholders in the nineteenth century any more than in the time of the apostles. Finally, he

declared: "The sinfulness of slaveholding depends upon the circumstances of the case, and no general rule can meet their circumstances."⁶⁵ That southern Methodists were mollified by this position may be seen from the resolution of North Carolina conference that they heartily approved "the very prudent, independent, and able manner in which the Rev. Dr. Bond has conducted the *Christian Advocate and Journal*; and that we regard him as being peculiarly well qualified for the important post which he occupies as senior editor of that General conference paper."⁶⁶

The extreme radicalism of the North brought protests from the South. Southerners considered that abolitionists were interfering in matters of which they were totally ignorant. The North was charged with arguing the abstract question of freedom or slavery as though servitude were to be introduced into the country for the first time, and not a system already present. It was also maintained that northern oratory was directed against the abuses of slavery rather than the system as a whole. The practical question was how to rid the country of slavery if it were incurably bad, and what should be done with freedmen. In answer to the suggestion that slaves should be freed and permitted to remain in the South, as they were in the North, one writer contended that the condition of northern negroes was not superior to that of those in the South.⁶⁷ Further, the same editor declared the position of the South to be that, "as a church, we have no authority from heaven or of men, to disturb or change the civil relations which are authorized and established by the State."⁶⁸

The quadrennium following the General Conference of 1840 witnessed a remarkable change in Methodism's official attitude towards slavery. Before 1842, ministers had been expelled from conferences, and members from the Church for the alleged sin of being avowed abolitionists; such an event would never occur again. Before that date, bishops, official papers and most conferences had sought to prevent the growth of abolition propaganda; never more would a conference be coerced and cowed into obedience on this question. In 1840, the General Conference had passed resolutions which were perfectly satisfactory to the slaveholding South; henceforth, no quadrennial conference of the Church would dare openly to support slavery. But it

must not be presumed that these gains, slight as some of them were, came because of a change of heart among Church officials. Fear was the controlling factor in this sudden change of policy. Threatened by a secession of unknown proportions, leaders of Methodism sought to retain as many members as possible. This could be done only by making concessions to the radical northern conferences. Curiously enough, after this had been done, the concessions which were granted during the succeeding twenty years were made, not to keep abolitionists but pro-slavery members within the Methodist fold!

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1. For Troy conference, see the Minutes for 1840. For New York, New England, Michigan, Ohio and North Ohio conferences, see Clark, *The Life and Times of Hedding*, pp. 560-61. For Erie conference, see Gregg, *History of Methodism in the Erie Conference*, Volume II, p. 128.
 2. For Philadelphia, New York, New Jersey, Providence, New England and Maine conferences see Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 566.
 3. Redford, *Western Cavaliers*, pp. 397-8.
 4. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume VIII, p. 66, col. 3; August 13, 1841. Concerning Pittsburg conference, Elliott says: "They distinguish between the system and those who hold slaves. The holders of slaves, who are such, not voluntarily, but by constraint, they receive and treat as brethren. For those who hold slaves, without constraint of law, they entertain no brotherly approbation. They believe, however, there are few of this description in the pale of the Methodist Episcopal Church, even at the extreme south." Concerning abolitionists, Elliot wrote that "disaffection and opposition to the Church is now the watchword of most Methodist abolitionists; or at least this is the case with that class with whom the Church has to contend. With others there is no controversy."
 5. See the Minutes of the conference for 1842.
 6. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 572.
 7. *Ibid.*, pp. 573-4.
 8. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 32.
 9. Channing, *Works*, p. 837. Cf. Birney, James G. *Birney and His Times*, pp. 367-8.
 10. Bennett, *History of Methodism in Wisconsin*, p. 186.
 11. *New England Christian Advocate*, Volume I, p. 2, col. 2; January 7, 1841.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 206, cols. 1-3; December 9, 1841.
 13. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XII, p. 14, col. 2; January, 1841.
 14. *Ibid.*, Volume XIII, p. 26, cols. 3-4; February 16, 1842. The editor wrote: "The ruffian rabble who have made the capitol the kennel of the nation have found in him the strange anomaly of a veteran politician who seems to be perfectly unconscious that party interests are paramount to national ones, that honor is opposed to honesty and slavery is freedom
" . . . Full of talents, honors and years, he seems to have descended by the appointment of Providence, from the first age and the highest seat of the nation, to stand in its popular assembly, a living rebuke to its folly and anarchy, and an impersonation of the patriotism of the older times. Let the nation prize and honor him, for it will never see his like again."
 15. *Ibid.*, p. 152, col. 4; September 21, 1842 and *Ibid.*, p. 156, cols. 2-3; September 28, 1842.

16. *The Liberator*, Volume XI, p. 61; col. 6; April 16, 1841. The following article on "Methodist Episcopacy" was quoted from the *Utica Wesleyan Methodist*:
 "The despotism of the Methodist Episcopacy has been developing itself more and more from the commencement of the anti-slavery struggle, not only in Utica but all over the country where there has been any effectual means taken to remove the 'great evil of slavery'. But the overwhelming proof of the arbitrary character of this system was furnished in the resolution of the last General Conference, and now stands as a law of the Church.' 'That it is *inexpedient* and UNJUSTIFIABLE for a colored person to TESTIFY AGAINST A WHITE PERSON IN CHURCH TRIALS in those States where such testimony is not admitted by courts of law.' If the 'highest judicatory' can pass such a resolution, and a preacher, at his own WILL, can reinstate in the church an expelled member, does it need any farther proof that 'the government of the M. E. Church, from its highest judiciary downwards is essentially and radically DESPOTIC' "?
17. Quoted in *The Liberator*, Volume XII, p. 89, cols. 2-3; June 10, 1842
18. *Ibid.*, Volume XI, p. 138, col. 3; August 27, 1841.
19. Quoted in Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 31-2. Elliott concludes: "Hence slavery was talked, and preached, and prayed about, and little else, making a watchword of the party the theme of the class-meeting, the love feast, and the prayer-meeting, as well as of the rostrum and the periodicals."
20. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume VIII, p. 3, cols. 1-2; April 23, 1841. In regard to abolitionism, the editor said: "There is a dangerous schismatic spirit, a practice, and principles in this recent abolitionism, which we cannot conscientiously adopt.
 "Politically, it is revolutionary, and tends to anarchy, rebellion, and treason. As a Christian, we respect the powers that be, though they may be even in political error." Abolitionism was "a system of agitation, rather than discussion." Relative to the methods of abolitionists he said that they had "taken part with a foreign power against the United States. Their accredited agents in Great Britain denounce and misrepresent this country, in a manner which we believe to be libelous and infamous." Indicating his future policy he concluded: "This is our final chapter on these points, and no ruthless array of words will, we presume, draw us from this intention."
21. *Supra*, p. 91, footnote 23.
22. Professor Norwood includes Pennsylvania (*Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, p. 48). Cf. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 31-2.
23. Quoted in *The Liberator*, Volume XII, p. 89, cols. 2-3; June 10, 1842.
24. At this time Scott was serving the Methodist church at Lowell, Massachusetts, where the congregation had taken the revolutionary step of choosing their own preacher instead of accepting the appointee of the bishop. For this, Scott was promised that every effort would be made at the ensuing annual conference to expel him from the Church. Strangely enough, no action was taken.
25. Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, p. 47.
26. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 187-206.
27. A member of the Methodist church at Duxbury, Massachusetts.
28. *The Liberator*, Volume XII, p. 150, cols. 5-6; September 23, 1842.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 170, cols. 4-5; October 28, 1842.
30. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIII, p. 156, col. 3; October 26, 1842.
31. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 202-3.
32. Lee, *Autobiography*, p. 237.
33. *Discipline of the Wesleyan Methodist Connection of America*, p. 21.

34. Matlack, *The Life of Orange Scott*, pp. 209-22. Cf. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 247-50.
35. *The Liberator*, Volume XIII., p. 114, col. 5; July 21, 1843. For examples of secessions from conferences, see Conable, *History of the Genesee Conference*, pp. 497-8; and *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 102, col. 4; October 13, 1843.
36. *The True Wesleyan*, Volume II., p. 19, col. 3; February, 1844. The significance of several thousand Wesleyans in the election of 1844 has not been suggested by any historical writer. Many of the Scottites resided in New York, the state which determined the election, and therefore are to be credited, in part at least, with the result.
37. Lee, *Autobiography*, p. 237.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 241-6. Cf. Scott, *Grounds for secession from the M. E. Church*, pp. 4-8; *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 1; col. 1; January 7, 1843.
39. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 241-6. Cf. Scott, *Grounds of Secession from the M. E. Church*, p. 4; *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 1, col. 1; January 7, 1843 and *Ibid.*, p. 5, cols. 1-4; January 14, 1843.
40. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIII., p. 174, col. 2; November 30, 1842.
41. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 241-6.
42. *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 45, col. 4; April 10, 1844.
43. *The Liberator*, Volume XIII., p. 149, col. 1; September 22, 1843.
44. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, p. 414. In another place he says: "O. Scott and his co-adjutors formed themselves into a separate party organization, calling themselves the 'True Wesleyans'; but long since they have found, to their sorrow, that they misnamed the brat, for the secession that they produced was a very feeble, little and illegitimate child. But they nursed it till it took the rickets; and the last I heard of it, it was fast wasting away, and 'the last state of it was worse than the first.'" (*Ibid.*, p. 364).
45. The first number was published January 7, 1843.
46. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 31-2.
47. *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 143, col. 2; September 9, 1843.
48. Alexander (*A History of the Methodist Church, South*, p. 13) states the situation exactly: "Prior to 1843 no Annual Conference was allowed to say that all slaveholding was sin. Subsequently no form of expression was objected to by the presiding officer of an annual conference."
49. *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 14, cols. 2-4; January 28, 1843. Lee was convinced that this was done for effect, in order to block the Wesleyan movement. He predicted that several members of New England conference would secede in 1844 or earlier.
50. Mudge, *History of the New England Conference*, p. 294. Cf. Townsend, *A New History of Methodism*, Volume II., pp. 182-3.
51. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, p. 582. The conferences presided over by Hedding were the Philadelphia, New Jersey, New York, Providence, New England and Maine.
52. Lee, *Autobiography*, pp. 251-2.
53. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 251.
54. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIII., p. 128, col. 3; August 10, 1842.
55. For Maine conference, see *Minutes of the Maine conference*, 1843, p. 13; and *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 169, col. 5; October 28, 1843. For Providence conference, see Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 243. For New Hampshire conference, see *Ibid.*, cols. 205-6.
56. The Genesee conference desired a change of the rule "so as not to admit or continue any person a member who holds a slave or slaves in any State, Territory, or District, where the laws of the State, Territory, or District will admit of emancipation and permit the emancipated slave to enjoy freedom." (*Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIV., p. 108, col. 2; July 5, 1842).

57. It was sometimes contended that, according to the rule (*supra*, p. 6) there must be "buying or selling of men, women and children" at the same time, or the law of the Church was not broken. The New York conference therefor asked for the restoration of the word "or" instead of "and" so that a wrong interpretation of the rule would be impossible.
58. Gregg, *History of Methodism in the Erie Conference*, Volume II., pp. 204-5.
59. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, pp. 269-70, 272-3.
60. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 186, col. 6; March 8, 1844.
61. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 237-8, 964-6.
62. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume XVI., p. 119, col. 5; March 9, 1842.
63. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 238-9.
64. For his previous conservatism, Bond had been called "pro-slavery" — a charge which was indignantly denied.
65. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 34-6.
66. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 270.
67. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume VI., p. 172, cols. 1-2; April 14, 1843. Said the editor: "What rights and immunities have they in common with their white brethren (of the North)? Are the high places of honor and profit open to them as they are to other men? Who ever heard or dreamed of a governor, judge, or congressman, of African descent, in Massachusetts? Has there ever been one of the race in a New England legislature, or even captain of a white militia company? Have the equality-loving citizens of the Old Bay State, shaken off all the prejudices of caste; are their drawing rooms, and the hands of their fair daughters accessible to merit independent of the hue of the skin? Why the fact is, regarding them as a class, the negroes of the free States have made no perceptible advance toward this sort of respectability, beyond their brethren of the South, if they have even gone so far."
68. *Ibid.*, p. 176, col. 2; April 21, 1843. The relation of the North and the South, as seen from a southern viewpoint, was admirably set forth by the editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*: "The former (South Carolina and Georgia) calm and placid as the surface of a mountain lake; the latter (New England) like the ocean in the uproar and rage of the storm. The one pursuing the legitimate and appropriate duties of the gospel in the old Methodist way; the other seeking extraneous objects by novel and pernicious means . . . The Methodist preacher at the North denouncing everything connected with slavery, and actually binding the fetters of the slaves with the greenest withes of prejudice and power, and contributing the whole of his moral influence to shut up the slave in the darkness of this life; and the Methodist preacher at the South intent upon his work, penetrating swamps, visiting the negro's cabin, breasting and braving the persistent malaria, if haply he may preach Jesus and Him crucified." (Quoted in the *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume VII., p. 154, col. 3; March 8, 1844). Perhaps the love of southern preachers for the salvation of slaves was overdrawn, but we have the record of the resolution of North Carolina conference, favoring religious instruction of slaves. (See, *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 161, col. 2; December 14, 1843). As for New England, probably the description was not exaggerated, although abolitionists there were no doubt as conscientious in their advocacy of abolitionism as a cure for the ills of the Church and State as were the southerners in their opposition to the anti-slavery program.

CHAPTER X

A REVERSAL OF POLICY

In 1840, all factions believed that conservatism had won and that the unity of the Church had been preserved. In 1844, the Church was hopelessly divided. Garrison, Scott, Storrs and Sunderland, in the role of prophets of a new era of freedom, had changed the current of Methodist history. When the General Conference of 1844 convened at New York, two powerful groups — southern and anti-slavery — faced each other in a struggle which ended in Methodism's greatest catastrophe. Between these was the conservative faction which had formerly thrown its strength with the South. For more than a year, however, those who made up this fast vanishing minority had been rapidly assuming an attitude of antagonism to the South. A clash on the future policy of the Church was inevitable.

Crises call forth leaders. In 1844 the Methodist Church faced one of the greatest of the many crucial periods through which the denomination has been compelled to pass. And to sustain the opinions of their sections, there were gathered in New York some of the most influential leaders that the Church has ever had — men gifted in debate and oratory, in the controversies of the press, on mission fields in the South and West, in marshalling the nation's spiritual forces. These men with mature convictions — men who in after years were to lead the two branches of Methodism as bishops, editors and influential pastors — sought the solution of one of the most important domestic questions ever before the people of this country.¹

Keenly interested in all the proceedings of this Conference were the Wesleyan Church leaders. Especially was this true of Orange Scott who watched from the gallery the struggle in which he had formerly been a leading participant.² Indeed, so intrusive were the Wesleyans that the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* considered it his duty to warn his readers in advance against errors that were, as a matter

of course, to be published in *The True Wesleyan*. For the management of this radical paper sought to give the widest publicity to the proceedings of the Conference by offering the publication for six weeks for twenty-five cents. The editor of the *Western* even suggested that the General Conference "sit with closed doors" and exclude the "Scottites" and those of similar beliefs.³

Experience had taught the bishops the futility of condemning abolition, or advising that ministers refrain from agitating the subject of slavery. Perhaps as a result of this knowledge, no mention of slavery was made in the bishops' address to the Conference.⁴ Further, the reply of the Conference of 1840 to the British Wesleyan Church had apparently been very effective, for no mention was made of slavery in the address of that Church in 1844. The same is true of addresses of the Canada Wesleyan Church and of the Evangelical Association.⁵ And when the Conference replied to these fraternal greetings, they carefully refrained from exciting passions which were soon to be unloosed.⁶

Probably as a result of the omission of the subject from the Address of the bishops, no committee on slavery was appointed at the beginning of this conference.⁷ But on the third day, this committee, on motion of John Early, was finally ordered.⁸ Orange Scott wrote that this measure carried by a very large majority, and that if full liberty of discussion were given in the Committee and on the floor of the Conference, abolitionists would give a good account of themselves. He was convinced that that was the purpose and disposition of many members of the Conference, but he was also certain that no effective measures would be adopted against slavery, because of the influence which it had over the Church. "But," said he, "if the subject can be freely and fully discussed, SLAVERY MUST, EVENTUALLY, DIE!"⁹

For three days the Conference was fairly deluged with petitions and resolutions on slavery.¹⁰ As has already been related, northeastern conferences asked for a change of the General Rule on the subject; Ohio and other western conferences presented their memorials; while southern conferences contented themselves with resolutions against any radical change. As had previously maintained, southern conferences were unanimous in maintaining the *status quo*.

Formerly, no effective action had been taken in response to demands from New England and the West; now the whole situation was to be definitely met and a decision reached.

Two cases came before the Conference for settlement. The first was the appeal of F. A. Harding of Baltimore conference. He had been suspended from his position in the conference for refusing to manumit some slaves which he had acquired by marriage. There was some difference of opinion as to whether the Maryland laws permitted manumission, but the fact that, according to the laws of that state, the slaves did not belong to Harding but to his wife, was fully established. Further, Harding had agreed to send the slaves to Liberia, or to a free state, if he could obtain his wife's and the slaves' permission. Not only was Harding charged with holding slaves, but, as a result of this sin, it was also maintained that it would be impossible to send him to a non-slaveholding congregation. Therefore, the "itinerant system" of the Church would be destroyed.¹¹

In many respects this case was similar to that involving Bishop Andrew, and it was consequently debated and the decision reached with the greater issue always in mind. After a week of debate, the General Conference refused to reverse the decision of Baltimore conference by a vote of 117 to 56.¹² Of the majority, only two votes — one from Missouri and one from Texas — were from southern conferences. Baltimore conference voted unanimously with the North. On the other hand, southerners had the support of all other border conferences, and also of nine delegates from northern conferences.¹³ Two results came from this southern defeat. Supporters of Andrew were alarmed because they saw that he was in danger. Abolitionists were apparently much encouraged, for there was another shower of anti-slavery petitions.¹⁴

Southern concern was shown in the preamble and resolution offered by Dr. Capers and Dr. Olin.¹⁵ They asked that, in view of the agitation on the question of slavery and abolitionism, and the embarrassment under which members worked in the Conference because of sectional feeling, a committee of three from each section "be appointed to confer with the bishops and report within two days, as to the possibility of adopting some plan, and what, for the permanent pacification of the church."¹⁶ Dr. Olin, in support of

the resolution, declared that he feared a breakup of the Church, and he was of the opinion that the only way to avoid a rupture was through mutual moderation. All seemed to feel that the Church was facing a crisis,¹⁷ and an hour of the following day was set aside as a time for fasting and prayer.¹⁸ Two days later, delegates of the two sections were requested to meet separately to discuss the question of compromise.¹⁹ May 17, Bishop Soule reported for the "Committee on Pacification" that they had found it impossible to reconcile the opinions of the two groups.²⁰ This "pacification scheme" is supposed by Elliott to have been an attempt on the part of southerners to break down all resistance to the pro-slavery South,²¹ but a study of the Journal and Debates of the Conference, together with much collateral evidence in the papers of the time, seems to show only a very sincere desire of the friends of peace to prevent a rupture of the Church.

More important than the case of Harding was that of Bishop Andrew. For the latter was to settle the question whether a bishop could hold slaves and continue to perform the duties of his office. It has been successfully maintained that some bishops had actually held slaves, while others had no scruples against the practice; and that delegates, not only from the South but also from the North, had, on several occasions, supported slaveholders for the office of bishop. Coke was charged with being a voluntary slaveholder, while Asbury and Whatcoat became involuntary slaveholders when slaves were bequeathed to them by the wills of Methodists. Even McKendree was not opposed to slaveholding, and urged the election of Logan Douglas as a bishop, even though he was known to be a slaveholder.²² As we have already noted, northern delegates, including Finley and Cartwright, were very enthusiastic in their support of Dr. Capers in 1832 and again in 1836 for the office of bishop.²³ And in 1840 the General Conference had declared that the mere holding of slaves should not be a barrier to any office in the gift of the Church.²⁴

Previous to the General Conference of 1844, there had been considerable discussion on slaveholding in the episcopacy. New England conferences petitioned that slaveholders be not elected to the office of bishop.²⁵ When Capers suggested that the South wanted a southerner for bishop, the

editor of *Zion's Herald* said that this would cripple the work of the Church and he was not in favor of a cripple for bishop.²⁶ The *Pittsburgh Christian Advocate* also opposed slaveholding bishops. He suggested that a slaveholder might be elected to the office and then change his residence to a northern state where manumission could be accomplished. "Such a movement should not subject him to the charge of profanity."²⁷ A southern writer held the same view as Capers and other leaders did, that bishops should be elected without regard to their connection with slavery, and that only merit should determine their selection.²⁸

The fact that Bishop Andrew was a slaveholder seems to have first become known through a controversy between Dr. Curry of Georgia conference and some northern leaders. By the time the delegates arrived in New York, abolitionists had succeeded in stirring northerners and a few delegates from slaveholding states to an uncompromising opposition to Bishop Andrew.²⁹

The committee on episcopacy began the investigation of Andrew's case almost as soon as it was appointed. The very fact that an abolitionist, Crandall of New England, conducted part of the negotiations was enough to warn Andrew. Before the full committee "he made a complete statement" of his connection with slavery.³⁰ The bishop became apprehensive of the outcome, and this, together with the state of his health and the needs of his motherless children, determined him to resign. Southern delegates were assembled and the bishop's decision announced. But the delegates protested so strongly that such action would "spread general discontent through the whole south,"³¹ that he promised not to resign.³² Thereafter, when a committee of five, with Dr. Bangs as chairman, came to acquaint him with northern sentiment, he refused to communicate with them except in writing.³²

May 20, ten days after Andrew met the southern delegates, J. A. Collins of Baltimore conference offered a preamble by which the Committee on Episcopacy was requested to investigate the report that one of the bishops held slaves.³³ The far-reaching consequences of the resolution seem to have been immediately apparent for Bishop Hedding considered it his duty to call "the attention of the conference to a rule in their Discipline, requiring them to remember, in all their discus-

sions that the eye of God was upon them and he hoped, at present especially, they would remember this.”³⁴

The report of the Committee was really the evidence submitted by Bishop Andrew himself. He stated that he had in his possession two slaves — a girl who had been left him by the will of an old lady in Augusta, Georgia, and a boy left him by his wife. In both instances, he was willing to send them to Liberia if they desired to go, or to a free state if they preferred, if he could be assured that provision would be made for their needs. In January, 1844, he married the second time. His wife held slaves whom she had inherited from the estate of her former husband, but Andrew declared that they were the property of his wife alone and that he had no interest in them.³⁵

An exciting debate on the Committee's report was begun, May 23,³⁶ when Alfred Griffith and John Davis, both of Baltimore conference, offered a resolution requesting Bishop Andrew to resign his office in the Methodist Episcopal Church, because of his connection with slavery. It was asserted that this “embarrassment” made it impossible for him to preside in certain conferences of the Church.³⁷ Mr. Griffith spoke at considerable length in support of his resolution, the rules being suspended which permitted each delegate only fifteen minutes in which to address the Conference.³⁸ Northerners contended that it was entirely a question of expediency. They believed that it was expedient for the bishop to resign, and that the Conference had the power to depose a bishop at any time. Southern delegates argued that Bishop Andrew had done nothing for which, according to the Discipline, he could rightly be required to resign his office.³⁹ The speeches on this resolution indicate that those ministers who sought the removal of Bishop Andrew failed utterly in their argument that he had done anything for which he could be held responsible, or had entered into any relation with slavery which he was able to remedy.⁴⁰

That this observation is correct may be seen from the fact that northerners shifted from their original position as to the reason for deposing Andrew. According to Griffiths resolution, emphasis was placed on the fact that Andrew was a slaveholder and that the Church had always been opposed to slavery in the Episcopacy. Only incidentally

was allusion made to the effect which the relation of the Bishop to slavery would have upon the itinerant system of the Church. But the resolution offered by James B. Finley and J. M. Trimble of Ohio conference as a substitute for Griffith's merely mentioned that Andrew had "become connected with slavery by marriage and otherwise," while the result upon the "itinerant general superintendency" was especially emphasized.⁴¹ The resolution provided that Andrew should not act as bishop as long as he was in any way connected with slavery, on the ground that he would not be received in some sections of the country. Apparently, it had been forgotten that he had been the presiding officer of conferences in Arkansas, Iowa, Illinois, Indiana and Missouri in 1843, and that he had given entire satisfaction to all concerned.⁴² Dr. Drake suggested that bishops be assigned particular areas during the succeeding four years, but the proposition met with little favor and the debate continued.⁴³ The northern attitude was well stated by Cass of New Hampshire conference, who declared that northerners would refuse to receive Bishop Andrew as their president, and that whole conferences would secede if Andrew remained a bishop.⁴⁴

For the South, Dr. George Pierce of Georgia conference, one of the most eloquent speakers of his section, put forth two propositions. First, he declared that the General Conference proceedings had brought the whole "Methodist Episcopal Church in a position of antagonism to the laws of the land." As he expressed it, the attitude had been assumed — "the Church, the Bible, the Discipline, and the laws of the land to the contrary notwithstanding, — that we have a right to make a man's membership depend upon the conditions of his doing a thing which, as a citizen of the state, he has no power or right to do."⁴⁵

Pierce was equally emphatic on the inexpediency of the proposed action. The argument that it was "expedient" for Bishop Andrew to resign was refuted, it being shown that the consequences would be worse by compelling southern conferences to set up for themselves than by permitting New England conferences to separate from the Church. In reply to the threat of New England that that section would withdraw from the Church, he asserted that New England had "been for the last twenty years a thorn in the flesh —

a messenger of Satan to buffet us! Let her go, and joy go with her, for peace will stay behind."⁴⁶

With the feeling of delegates stirred to the highest pitch, it was but natural that measures of compromise should be proposed. J. A. Collins moved that Andrew be requested to get rid of his slaves within four years.⁴⁷ When the delegates were about to vote on Finley's resolution, Bishop Hedding suggested that the Conference should not meet in the afternoon, so that the bishops might "consult together" and bring in some plan which would solve the problem before them. This proposal was agreed to by the delegates "with general and great cordiality." The bishops' report was presented by Bishop Waugh on May 31. They recited the familiar details of the excitement in the Conference and expressed their deep solicitude as to the result. Finally, they recommended that further consideration of Bishop Andrew's case be postponed until 1848. They believed that, if this were done, the people would be better able to judge as to the action that should be taken. They were of the opinion that a division of the bishops' work might be made so that no conference or bishop would be embarrassed in any way. The bishops justified themselves in their recommendation because of their "strong desire to prevent disunion, and to promote harmony in the Church."⁴⁸

Meanwhile, New England abolitionists were not idle. Greatly alarmed lest plans for compromise might be successful, they met and unanimously agreed that, if Bishop Andrew were permitted to continue his work, they would secede and request Hedding to become their bishop. The latter was in conference with the other bishops and the New Englanders feared to call him out, lest their whole program should be defeated. But on June 1, before the bishops' report was considered, Hedding met an abolitionist in the vestry of the church, where the former was given an account of the action of the delegates from New England. Hedding agreed that New England conferences would secede if Andrew were not disposed of. When the Conference began the consideration of the report, Hedding stated that he wished to withdraw his name from the document. He said he had signed it because he thought it would be a peace measure, "but facts had come to his knowledge since, which led him to believe that such would not be the case." Waugh immediately weakened and

said if the report occasioned a long debate he might withdraw his name. Morris desired that his signature should remain on the paper "as a testimony that he had done what he could to preserve the unity and peace of the Church." Soule had no desire to withdraw his name from a document which had already gone forth to the country "through a thousand mediums."⁴⁹ That the influence which was brought to bear upon Bishop Hedding was responsible for the defeat of the plan to postpone final action on Bishop Andrew's case until 1848 seems probable. For the motion of Nathan Bangs that the bishops' address be tabled prevailed by the narrow margin of 95 to 84.⁵⁰

Abolitionists had passed one more point of danger. They had defeated a plan for compromise and delay, and the possible destruction of their program. The next step was to return to Finley's resolution. This was adopted, June 1, by a vote of 110 to 68.⁵¹ One delegate from each of the Ohio, Michigan and Rock River conferences; three from Illinois, five from Baltimore, four from Philadelphia, and two from New Jersey, voted with the South; while only one southern delegate, Clark of Texas, cast his vote with the North.⁵²

But abolitionists were not yet safe. June 3, two Baltimore conference delegates, Slicer and Sargent, moved that the action of June 1 be considered nothing more than advisory, and "that the final disposition of the case of Bishop Andrew be postponed until the General Conference of 1848."⁵³ This was in harmony with the bishops' address which had already been considered. Again the attempt at compromise failed, 75 to 68.⁵⁴

One more question concerning Bishop Andrew remained to be decided. The bishops asked what the status of Andrew was to be during the ensuing four years. The Conference replied that his name should be retained in the Minutes, Hymn-book and Discipline,⁵⁵ and that he should be supported equally with other bishops.⁵⁶ The Conference also decided that Bishop Andrew should be given work when he freed himself from all connection with slavery.⁵⁷

The difference between the General Conferences of 1844 and 1840 is no more clearly seen than in the report of the Committee on Slavery, June 7, in favor of rescinding the action of the General Conference of 1840 against receiving

colored testimony in church trials in slave states.⁵⁸ When the resolution was presented, Bishop Soule was the presiding officer. George Peck, the chairman, says the bishop disapproved the action, scowled and shook his head and shrugged his shoulders. When he put the motion "he characterized it as a proposal to rescind the 'Bishops' resolutions' adopted by the last General Conference." But the protest of Soule was without avail, for the resolution was adopted, 115 to 40.⁵⁹

As one reviews the legislation of this General Conference on slavery, he can find no question upon which abolitionists were not entirely successful. To analyze the reasons for this complete reversal of policy, the evidence of northern and southern writers must be considered. Some northern leaders claimed that the Methodist Church itself was responsible for this remarkable change. Long gives the credit to New England and the West.⁶⁰ Mudge affirms that the victory came because of the educational propaganda begun in New England and New Hampshire conferences and gradually carried to a few other groups of ministers.⁶¹ And Gilbert Haven, writing many years afterward, considered the result simply the culmination of the work of the Church on that subject from the beginning of the organization.⁶²

But the real reason for the success of abolitionists seems to have been the fear that radical northern conferences would join the Wesleyan Church. Capers declared that, since Scott and others seceded, leaders who remained in the Methodist Church had sought to convince the people "that they could be as ultra as they pleased, and continue in the church."⁶³ In the General Conference it was asserted that northern leaders were "pushed on by the people,"⁶⁴ and that if nothing were done, "the people will go off in *troops* to our enemies.'" "Already," said Brewster, "the organization of the Wesleyan Church has produced more action in the M. E. Church than could otherwise have been secured in ten years."⁶⁵

But one situation is not explained by these writers: namely, the coalition of Baltimore and abolition ministers. It is true that Baltimore conference had suspended ministers for slaveholding but a charge of being abolitionists had never been brought against this body of ministers. James Porter,

a delegate from New England conference, supplies the reason for this union of conservatives and radicals. He emphasizes very strongly the fact, to which Capers and Brewster had called attention, that the "Scottite" secession had caused a veritable panic among those who remained. Ministers of Baltimore conference were apparently willing to do their share to keep New England conferences from seceding. When Porter arrived in New York, he was invited to confer with one of the leaders of Baltimore conference, whom Porter considered the greatest of the conservative group. Porter was asked what New England wanted. He replied that his section desired what we have seen they obtained; and besides he demanded that abolitionists should not be further condemned. He also asked for a stronger stand against slavery in the Church.⁶⁶ The bargain was made that Baltimore conference would support New England in the first four demands. Other northern delegates were called into conference and an agreement reached that all that abolitionists absolutely demanded should be done.⁶⁷ Since abolitionists felt that their cause would be prejudiced if they themselves conducted the proceedings, conservatives of Baltimore and other conferences agreed "to take the laboring oar into their own hands"⁶⁸ and permit delegates from New England to use their influence in other ways. This agreement was carried out in every particular; every attempt on the part of southern delegates to stir abolitionists to denounce slavery ended in failure.⁶⁹

As the work of this Conference is surveyed, several conclusions seem to be entirely justified. First, that the underlying cause of the reversal of the policy of former General Conferences was the fear that abolition conferences of New England would withdraw from the Church and that this dissatisfaction would become general throughout the North. Second, when the cases of Harding and Andrew are considered, one can not but feel that these men were the victims of an unjustifiable attack for politico-religious purposes.⁷⁰ This is especially true of Andrew. It is significant that his own statement was not challenged. As one reads the document it is apparent that he was not a slaveholder of his own volition. Third, while New England had been saved to the Church, the attack on Andrew made the situation intolerable for southern delegates. One does not need to speculate

as to who was right and who was wrong;⁷¹ the fact remains that northern and southern delegates were diametrically opposed to each other. Continued unity was impossible.

1. Professor Norwood (*The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, pp. 59-60) mentions a number of these leaders. George Peck probably should be included.
2. McTyeire, *A History of Methodism*, p. 640.
3. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 3, col. 1; April 19, 1844.
4. *Journal of the General Conference*, 1844, pp. 151-71.
5. The Evangelical Association was a German organization.
6. *Journal of the General Conference*, 1844, pp. 171-86.
7. *Ibid.*, pp. 8-12.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 13.
9. *American Wesleyan Observer*, Volume I., p. 55, col. 1; May 7, 1844. This paper was published solely to give the news of this conference.
10. *Journal of the General Conference*, 1844, pp. 13-28. Professor Norwood cites the report of the Committee on Slavery that there were ten thousand people who petitioned the Conference against slavery. (Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, p. 60).
11. According to this "system," ministers could be sent to any point in a conference and, if the contention of some leaders, that a minister might be transferred at will be allowed, a minister could be sent to any appointment within the whole Church. In this instance, the fact that Harding was unacceptable to a single town or village militated against his worth as a minister anywhere in the whole Church. Cf. Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, pp. 61-2.
12. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XV., p. 78, col. 4; May 15, 1844. "Thus the great question has been decided in favor of Northern principles by more than two to one." The vote to confirm the action of Baltimore conference was 111 to 53. (Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, p. 62, note 11).
13. *Debates in the General Conference*, 1844, p. 29; May 7, 1844. Cf. *Journal of the General Conference*, 1844, p. 240 (Appendix). The votes of the northern conferences were: Rock River, 1; Illinois, 3 (a majority); New Jersey, 2; Philadelphia, 3.
14. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 42.
15. Dr. Olin was from New York conference but had lived in the South.
16. *Journal of the General Conference*, 1844, pp. 42-3. Cf. Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, p. 63; and Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 43. A suggestion that three members from the border states be added to the committee was defeated. (*Debates in General Conference*, 1844, p. 54).
17. *Debates in General Conference*, 1844, pp. 54-7.
18. *Journal of the General Conference*, 1844, pp. 43, 46.
19. *Ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
20. *Ibid.*, p. 54. The report reads: "The Committee of Conference, have instructed me (Bishop Soule) to report that after a calm and deliberate investigation of the subject submitted to their consideration, they are unable to agree upon any plan of compromise to reconcile the views of the northern and southern Conferences."
21. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 292-6.
22. *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 7; December 13, 1844. Grisley Rush wrote: "From the spirit of the gospel of our blessed Saviour, the Northern delegates seem to have been very sure that a Bishop of the Methodist E. Church had never been connected with slavery, but in this perhaps they are mistaken. Upon close examination, perhaps, it will be found that Dr. Coke, that great and good man, while in a foreign island, was connected with slavery; and I am sure that Bishops Asbury and Whatcoat were

both connected with it; and I doubt whether there has been a Bishop in America, since their death, but has been connected with slavery—and whether the North, with the South to help them, can make a Bishop without connecting him with slavery, for this reason:—In 1828, I was searching the Records, in Hillsborough, N. C. and in Clerk's office at that place I found on Record the will of Francis Moreland, who died sometime before that date—the time not remembered; and in the will of said Moreland, he gave to Francis Asbury and Whatcoat, Bishops of the Methodist E. Church, and their successors, his negro slaves, over a certain age; and all not that age he left to his wife, during her life, and at her death to go to said Asbury and Whatcoat, Bishops of the Methodist E. Church, and their successors forever."

Cf. Virginia Pamphlets, Volume 2—An Address to the People of the County of Accomac by George P. Scarborough and 15 others. "It was even said that no slaveholder had ever been a Bishop of the Methodist Ep. Church. Dr. Coke was a Bishop, and Dr. Coke was a slaveholder—made so by voluntary purchase. We assert this upon authority which cannot be doubted, and challenge contradiction. Bishop McKendree at one time fully made up his mind to become a slaveholder; but afterwards declined doing so, not because of any incompatibility of Slavery with his office of Bishop; but because he was advised by his friends that a slave of his own would not obey him more readily than if he belonged to another. At one time a slave-holder came within one vote of being elected a Bishop; and it is believed that Dr. Capers could have been elected in 1832, if the South had united upon him. Bishop McKendree openly manifested his desire that Thomas Douglas be elected Bishop, although he knew him to be an extensive slaveholder, in a State where emancipation was impracticable. Now 'Southern men, holding slaves, have at different times, been supported for the Episcopacy, by Northern votes,' ever since the organization of the Church.' None but the wilfully blind, therefore, can fail to see that this uncompromising hostility to a slaveholding Bishop, of which we have lately heard so much, is of modern origin."

23. Supra, pp. 67-8, footnotes 28-31.
24. Supra, p. 98. Bishop Andrew makes it perfectly clear that slaveholding was never broached to him when he was elected Bishop in 1832. "But I was nominated and elected. No one asked me if I was a slaveholder; not one asked me my principles on the subject; and no one dared to ask a pledge of me, or it would have been met as it would have deserved." (Lee and Smith, *The Debates of the General Conference of the M. E. Church*, May, 1844, p. 206).
25. For New England conference, see Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 251; and Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 32. For Maine conference, see *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 169, col. 5; October 28, 1843. For Providence conference, see *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIV., p. 108, col. 1; July 5, 1843.
26. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIV., p. 170, cols. 3-4; October 25, 1843. Abolitionists and other northerners seemed to lose sight of the fact that if their position were accepted by the Church, northern bishops would be no more acceptable to the South than slaveholding bishops would be in the North.
27. *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 18, cols. 6-7; February 21, 1844. "Dr. Capers will pardon the liberty we take in suggesting, that tho' no man is worthy of the office who liberates his slaves to be elected a bishop, yet we think it can well be supposed, a brother elected to that office might avail himself of the position to liberate his slaves by changing his residence from South to North, when his relations to the Church should not render a Southern residence necessary. Such a movement should not subject him to the charge of profanity. Our individual opinion

- is, that the South needs the residence of some of our bishops, and that they should be Southern men. But as slaveholders would not be received in that office with undivided cordiality in Northern Conferences, and as our superintendency is *general* as well as *itinerant*, it is a question the approaching conference will not fail to consider, whether it would be *expedient* to elect any one to that office, however otherwise worthy, who holds slaves."
28. Southern Christian Advocate, Volume VI., p. 192, col. 5; May 19, 1843.
 29. Myers, The Disruption of the M. E. Church, p. 42. Elliott says that the fact that Andrew held slaves was not known in the middle and northern conferences until it was noised about by preachers on the way to General Conference. (Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 295).
 30. Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844, p. 69.
 31. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 302; and Debates in General Conference, 1844, pp. 112-15. Dr. Longstreet's account is as follows: "When he (Andrew) reaches here he finds the conference in commotion; he is pained and agonized; he convenes the delegates from the slave-holding conferences, and, for the sake of peace, proposes to resign; but we to a man, without a dissenting voice, declared to him 'that, if he sought the peace of the Church by that course, he would be disappointed of his object; for that his resignation to appease the clamor of the abolitionists would but spread general discontent through the whole south. We can not lie down and see you deposed. If it has come to this, that being connected with slavery disqualifies you, we too are disqualified.'" Cf. Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church, p. 67.
 32. Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844, p. 68.
 33. Journal of the General Conference, 1844, p. 58. These read:
 "Whereas it is currently reported, and generally understood, that one of the Bishops of the M. E. Church has become connected with slavery; and whereas it is due to this General Conference to have a proper understanding of the matter; therefore,
 "Resolved, That the Committee on Episcopacy be instructed to ascertain the facts in the case and report the results of their investigation to this body to-morrow morning."
 The fact that the investigation had already been made is conclusively shown by Professor Norwood. (See his Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844, p. 69).
 34. Debates in General Conference, 1844, p. 68.
 35. *Ibid.*, p. 73. Bishop Andrew's very important statement is given in full:
 "In reply to your inquiry, I submit the following statement of all the facts bearing on my connexion with slavery. Several years since (Southern Christian Advocate, Volume VIII., p. 26, col. 2; fall of 1844, says about 1837) an old lady, of Augusta, Georgia, bequeathed to me a mulatto girl, in trust that I should take care of her until she should be nineteen years of age; that *with her consent* I should then send her to Liberia; and that in case of her refusal, I should keep her, and make her as free as the laws of the State of Georgia permit. When the time arrived, she refused to go to Liberia, and of her own choice remains *legally* my slave, although I derive no pecuniary profit from her, (An interview was held with the slave girl by A. B. Longstreet and George W. Lane, to determine her wishes. This was on December 4, 1841. See Smith, Life and Letters of Andrew, pp. 312-13) she continues to live in her own house on my lot; and has been, and still is at perfect liberty to go to a free State at her pleasure; but the laws of the state will not permit her emancipation, nor admit such a deed of emancipation to record, and she refuses to leave the State. In her case, therefore, I have been made a slaveholder legally, but without my own consent.
 "2dly. About five years since, the mother of my former wife left to her daughter, *not to me*, a negro boy; and as my wife died

without a will more than two years since, by the laws of the State he becomes legally my property. In this case, as in the former, emancipation is impracticable in the State; but he shall be at liberty to leave the State whenever I shall be satisfied that he is prepared to provide for himself, or I can have sufficient security that he will be protected and provided for in the place to which he may go.

"3dly. In the month of January last I married my present wife, she being at the time possessed of slaves, inherited from her former husband's estate, and belonging to *her*. Shortly after my marriage, being unwilling to become their owner, regarding them as strictly hers, and the law not permitting their emancipation, I secured them to her by a deed of trust.

"It will be obvious to you, from the above statement of facts, that I have neither bought nor sold a slave; that in the only two instances in which I am legally a slaveholder, emancipation is impracticable. As to the servants owned by my wife, I have no legal responsibility in the premises, nor could my wife emancipate them if she desired to do so. I have thus plainly stated all the facts in the case, and submit the statement for the consideration of the General Conference."

How a member of the General Conference misstated the facts may be seen from the following: "In January, 1844, Bishop Andrew married a widow lady, who owned slaves by a former husband. He took no step toward setting them free, but rather took steps to have their freedom placed entirely beyond his power." (Elliott, *The Great Secession*, p. 295). Rather it was a case of Andrew not permitting slaves to come to him when he might have become their owner. Elliott omits the fact that it was legally impossible to free slaves in Georgia.

36. Debates in General Conference, 1844, pp. 74-5. The purpose of the delay was to give delegates from each section an opportunity to meet separately. Dr. Bond took occasion to emphatically deny that northerners were attempting to force the South into secession. He considered that such a scheme was far from the minds of northerners. (*Ibid.*, p. 74).
37. *Ibid.*, p. 82. Their statement is as follows:

"Whereas, the Rev. James O. Andrew, one of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church, has become connected with slavery; and whereas it has been, from the origin of said Church, a settled policy and the invariable usage to elect no person to the office of Bishop who was embarrassed with this "great evil," as under such circumstances it would be impossible for a Bishop to exercise the functions and perform the duties assigned to a General Superintendent with acceptance in that large portion of his charge in which slavery does not exist; and whereas Bishop Andrew was himself nominated by our brethren of the slaveholding States, and elected by the General Conference of 1832, as a candidate who, though living in the midst of a slaveholding population, was nevertheless free from all personal connection with slavery; and whereas this is, of all periods in our history as a Church, the one least favorable to such an innovation upon the practice and usage of Methodism as to confide a part of the itinerant General Superintendency to a slaveholder; therefore,

"Resolved, That the Rev. James O. Andrew be, and he is hereby, affectionately requested to resign his office as one of the Bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church."

38. *Ibid.*, 1844, p. 84. This was done in spite of the protest of Slicer who said if the rule were suspended they might "all write home that they would be home 'on or about' the 4th of July."
39. "We do not believe that the connection of Bishop Andrew with slavery was criminal, if tried by the rules and common sentiments of the M. E. Church." Bishop Andrew had not disobeyed the General Rule "for he has neither bought nor sold" slaves. (Lee

and Smith, *Debates of the General Conference, 1844*, p. 337). "No one can deny that if there are any circumstances in which it is impracticable to emancipate slaves, those are the very circumstances in which the Bishop found himself a slaveholder." (*Ibid.*, p. 338). In regard to the claim that it was the settled policy of the Church not to elect slaveholders as bishops, Lee and Smith said: "There is no such written policy, and every one knows that if it exists it has not been settled, for the South have been all the while contending and striving for a slaveholding Bishop, while hundreds of Northern men petitioned this very conference against the election of a slaveholder to the Episcopacy." (*Ibid.*, pp. 343-4). Lee and Smith were Wesleyans.

40. James Porter says: "This resolution was directly to the point and should have been adopted. But it was a little too explicit for the Conference and the times." (*The Methodist Quarterly Review*, Volume LIII., p. 245; April, 1871).

41. *Debates in General Conference, 1844*, p. 100. Finley's resolution was as follows: "Whereas, the Discipline of our Church forbids the doing of anything calculated to destroy our itinerant general superintendency, and whereas, Bishop Andrew has become connected with slavery by marriage and otherwise, and this act having drawn after it circumstances which, in the estimation of the General Conference, will greatly embarrass the exercise of his office as an itinerant general superintendent, if not in some places entirely prevent it; therefore,

"Resolved, That it is the sense of this General Conference that he desist from the exercise of this office so long as this impediment remains."

42. Smith, *Life and Letters of Andrew*, pp. 322-30.
43. *Debates in General Conference, 1844*, p. 106. "Erastus," a southern correspondent, made the same suggestion in 1843: "I would propose then, that the whole work be divided into districts or dioceses, I care nought for the name; and that, to each district a Bishop be assigned by the General Conference, such appointments to be permanent, or subject to the revision of each General Conference. These Bishops may be nominated or elected by the delegates of each district." (*Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume VI., p. 192, col. 5; May 19, 1843).
44. *Ibid.*, 1844, p. 109.
45. *Ibid.*, p. 110.
46. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11. Pierce said: "The southern Church has nothing to fear, and she has nothing to ask on this subject. As far as we are concerned, sir, the greatest blessing that could befall us would be a division of this union. There, sir, at the south, we dwell in peace, and the good Shepherd watches the flock and guards us from all harm. There are no jarring strings, no discordant sounds, no incarnate emissaries of the evil one going about seeking whom they may devour . . ."

Other important addresses were given by Capers (Shipp, *History of Methodism in South Carolina*, pp. 479-92); and Henry Bascom, whom George Peck characterized as a "wonderful man" and a "prince of orators, endowed with an affluence of thought and language unsurpassed by the greatest names of this age." (Peck, *Life and Times of G. Peck*, p. 252). For the North, several names stand out prominently. When George Peck addressed the General Conference on May 25, the *New York Post* said "that he spoke in a strain of eloquence seldom equalled on that floor. His panegyric on New England was as beautiful as just." (*Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 80, col. 4; June 5, 1844) Roche (*Life of John Price Durbin*, p. 140) singles out Durbin and L. L. Hamline as two of the most important northerners. That the latter was one of the most powerful debaters in the Conference is fully attested by the fact that Myers takes so much trouble to refute his arguments. Hamline considered especially the power of the General Conference to depose a bishop. Southern delegates took the

negative view but Hamline affirmed that the power rested with the General Conference. (Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 68 ff.) The address of Hamline has assumed an importance which none of the other speeches did because his arguments have been used to justify deposing bishops since that time. The limitation of the power of bishops constitutes another chapter in the growth of democracy in the Methodist Episcopal Church.

47. *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Volume LIII., p. 246; April, 1871.
48. *Journal of General Conference*, 1844, pp. 75-6. See also, Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 64-5.
49. *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Volume LIII., p. 247; April, 1871. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 65.
50. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 44-5. Myers says: "the South" resisted "this section as one man. It saw then that the last hope for Southern Methodism, in that General Conference, had fled."
51. *Journal of General Conference*, 1844, pp. 83-4.
52. Smith, *History of Methodism in Georgia and Florida*, p. 381. It is interesting to note that Clark was contemplating moving from Texas to the North because of his family's health!
53. *Debates in General Conference*, 1844, p. 192. Cf. *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Volume LIII., p. 247; April, 1871.
54. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 45.
55. This was carried, 155 to 17.
56. The vote was 152 to 14.
57. The vote was 103 to 67.
58. *Journal of General Conference*, 1844, p. 123. This had been demanded by some northern conferences. For Providence conference see *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIV., p. 108, col. 1; July 5, 1843. For Maine conference, see *The True Wesleyan*, Volume I., p. 169, col. 5; October 28, 1843.
59. Peck, *Life and Times of G. Peck*, pp. 243-4.
60. Long, *Pictures of Slavery in Church and State*, p. 31.
61. Mudge, *History of the New England Conference*, p. 295.
62. *The Liberator*, Volume XXXI., p. 52, col. 4; March 29, 1861. He says: "The Church has contended ceaselessly and mightily for the great reform. In 1844, after ten years of faithful labor by a portion of her ministry and laity, she staid the proud march of the Slave Power, sacrificing her, at that time, most influential section, rather than allow one, whose wife held slaves, to preside in her Conferences. It was a great victory, and resulted in the secession of the slavery loving section."
63. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume VII., p. 198, col. 3; May 24, 1844. The statement of Capers was made May 13, and is as follows:
"It appears, that since the secession of Scott, Sunderland and others, on the rabid principle of ultra-abolitionism, many of the preachers have leaned that way, for the purpose of persuading the people who are sympathizing with the seceders, that they could be as ultra as they pleased, and continue in the church."
64. Lee and Smith, *Debates of General Conference*, 1844, p. 33. These writers also made this comment on the General Conference: "The appeal of Mr. Harding and the case of Bishop Andrew compelled the Conference to act on the subject, and to do it so as to give satisfaction to the North, who had been promised that every thing should be done, and, at the same time, satisfying the South, who had been assured that nothing would be done, was not an easy task." (*Ibid.*, p. 328).
65. *The True Wesleyan*, Volume II., p. 96, col. 6; June 15, 1844.
66. *Methodist Quarterly Review*, Volume LIII., pp. 234-43; April, 1871. The demands were: "That Bishop Andrew should be required to purge himself of slavery or vacate the episcopal office. 2. That Baltimore should be sustained in the case of Mr. Harding. 3. That the infamous Few resolution against allowing colored members to testify against white persons in Church trials should be rescinded.

4. That no further abuse of abolitionists shall be perpetrated. 5. We added that we wanted several other things more decidedly antislavery in their character, but could hardly expect them under the circumstances."
67. That is, the conviction of Andrew was determined upon before the trial started. That corruption was not absent from this Conference is shown from the record of the election of bishops. On the first ballot, no candidate had a majority. On the second, more votes were cast than there were delegates and Bishop Heddington "pronounced the election of E. S. Janes and L. E. Hamline void, on account of the illegal votes cast, and directed another balloting." The result was no better. "Prior to the *third* balloting, the Secretaries were ordered to call the list; and each man, as his name was called, was directed to come up, and deposit his vote for two Bishops." "During this ballot two tickets were found together, and ordered to be reserved until the tickets were counted. When the count was completed, it was ascertained that there were 177 tickets (the full number) without them, and they were cast aside." (*Journal of General Conference, 1844, p. 128*).
68. For a similar conclusion, see Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844, p. 77*. Professor Norwood relates that a southerner asked an abolitionist why the radicals said so little. The reply was: "Oh! *we* have nothing to do now. The Baltimore Conference is doing *our* work for us. And they will get all the odium; and we all the benefit." The subsequent history proved that the statement was a correct appraisal of the situation in both Baltimore and New England conferences.
69. *Methodist Quarterly Review, Volume LIII., pp. 242-3; April, 1871*. Cf. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church, p. 42*. The first is a northern view; the second is a southern statement. Inasmuch as Myers is cited several times as an authority, it may be advisable to state that he uses Porter's account and proves his contention from the statements of the New Englander.
70. In 1850, Webster said: "That separation (of the Methodist Church) was brought about by differences of opinion upon this particular subject of slavery . . . The result was against my wishes and my hopes. I have read all their proceedings and all their arguments; but I have never yet been able to come to the conclusion that there was any real ground for that separation; in other words, that any good could be produced by that separation. I must say I think there was some want of candor and charity." (*Webster, Writings and Speeches, Volume X., p. 63*) This was a part of Webster's famous speech on the Compromise of 1850, March 7, 1850, which contributed to the defeat of Webster for the presidency in 1852.
71. See Professor Norwood's attempt to decide the question, whether or not Bishop Andrew should have married a woman who held slaves and whether or not he should have resigned, voluntarily, his position as bishop. (*Schism in the Methodist Church, pp. 70-72*). It seems to me that he is in serious error in holding that he was "to blame for connecting himself with slavery," inasmuch as the legislation of the General Conference of 1840, if not that of the entire period of the history of the Methodist Episcopal Church, attached no immortality to the holding of slaves by bishops. The proceedings of the General Conference of 1844 bear the marks of expediency and the worst of politics rather than of justice and fair dealing.

PART III

THE EVER WIDENING BREACH

CHAPTER XI

THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH, SOUTH

Division of the Methodist Episcopal Church was not a new topic. Wilbur Fisk had predicted it as early as March, 1835.¹ Some delegates to the General Conference of 1836 also favored a separation from the Church unless abolitionists could be silenced;² while, after the Conference, a number of southerners insistently called for a new Church.³ In the bishops' address to the General Conference of 1840 it was stated that many abolitionists had refrained from extreme action because they knew it would lead to "the division of the Church."⁴ And previous to the General Conference of 1844, William Capers had written that division was possible though undesirable unless northerners forced the issue.⁵

As might readily be imagined, the debates in the General Conference of 1844 renewed the thought of division. Not only southern delegates but those from the North as well admitted that the Church faced secession or division. In none of the statements of southern delegates is a desire for division expressed; on the contrary, it was with evident regret that they contemplated the division of the Church into two independent bodies. But the action in regard to Bishop Andrew made it impossible for southern ministers to remain in the old organization.⁶

The Finley resolution relative to Bishop Andrew was adopted June 1; two days later, Dr. Capers submitted a plan of separation,⁷ which provided for two General Conferences, but left the Book Concern and the Mission work the common possessions of the two bodies. June 5, Capers reported that the committee of nine, to whom the proposal had been submitted, were unable to agree upon any recommendation which they considered would be acceptable to the General Conference.

The failure of this plan of compromise resulted in a declaration by southern delegates,⁸ which was presented by A. B. Longstreet. In this document it was stated that the

action taken in Bishop Andrew's case and the "agitation on the subject of slavery and abolition in a portion of the Church" made it impossible for southern conferences to longer submit to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁹ This declaration was not presented as a resolution; it was simply a statement of the southern position and asked nothing. But the General Conference, after considerable debate, refused to admit that the action in the case of Andrew was "extra-judicial", and reprimanded the southern delegates for their action.¹⁰ Dr. Elliott moved that the declaration of the southern delegates be submitted to a "Committee of Nine," the personnel of which was almost the same as that to which Capers' suggestion had been referred.¹¹ On the same day, J. B. McFerrin of Tennessee conference and Tobias Spicer of Troy conference offered the following resolution: "*Resolved*, That the committee appointed to take into consideration the communication of the Delegates from the Southern Conferences be instructed — provided they cannot, in their judgment, devise for an amicable adjustment of the difficulties now existing in the Church on the subject of slavery — to devise, if possible, a constitutional plan for a mutual and friendly division of the Church."¹² Crowder moved that the word "constitutional" be stricken out, but his suggestion was not adopted.¹³

The "Committee of Nine" reported June 7. On the following day the report was considered and, on motion of Dr. Elliott, adopted.¹⁴ By the first resolution, the delegates agreed to a peaceable division of the membership of the Church. Adherence to one Church or the other was to be determined by a majority vote of the members of "societies, stations, and Conferences," and the territory north or south of the division line was to be inviolable. By the second resolution, ministers were permitted to choose between the two churches, "without blame" in either case. The succeeding nine resolutions provided for a just and equitable division of the Church property, while the last requested the bishops to submit the third resolution, providing for a change of the sixth restrictive rule, to annual conferences for their concurrence.

In view of the later action of northern conferences, it is advisable to note the votes on the resolutions. The first carried, 146 to 16, the delegates of non-slaveholding states

registering ninety-five of the majority vote. The second resolution passed, 139 to 17; while the third, which provided for the reference to annual conferences of the question of changing the sixth restrictive article, had only ten votes in the negative. The fifth proposition passed, 151 to 13. All other resolutions were adopted, but the result is not recorded. It is to be noted that these changes, radical as they undoubtedly were — were approved by majorities of from twenty-eight to thirty-eight from northern delegates alone, over the combined vote of southern and ultra-abolition delegates.¹⁵ In regard to the third resolution, which was to be voted upon by annual conferences, the General Conference needed to give a two-thirds majority in order to make such a change valid. As Myers shows, "*the Northern members alone* gave within nine votes of the two-thirds majority required for said change."¹⁶

Between the delegates of the two sections, goodwill and mutual forbearance seemed much in evidence. That they separated is not strange; that they did it peaceably seems incredible. True, the actual separation was contingent upon the necessity which southern conferences might find for such action, but no one in the General Conference of 1844 expected to see southerners sitting as delegates in the General Conference of 1848.

On the day following the adjournment of the General Conference, the delegates of southern conferences held a meeting in New York. Their purpose was to secure uniformity of action in their annual conferences, and to forestall hasty procedure. They recommended to the conferences which they represented that a convention be held in Louisville, Kentucky, May 1, 1845; and that conferences choose delegates who would represent as far as possible the sentiment of the people in their territory on the question of the division of the Church.¹⁷ They also issued an "Address" to southern Methodists,¹⁸ in which they reviewed the action of the General Conference, made a defense of their opposition to the North, and called attention to the situation faced by the South. The Plan of Separation was approved as the best that could then be devised. They emphatically stated that the Plan did not make the decision as to whether or not division should take place, but that the decision was left to the southern conferences. They pointed out that division seemed inevit-

able, and the question which must be decided was whether it should take place at once or at a later time. Excitement in the consideration of the question was discouraged, while a fair weighing of all the evidence on both sides was urged.

While the decision was to be made by southern conferences, the delegates believed that they had had exceptional opportunities to reach the proper conclusion. Since they were of the opinion that the South would expect them to give their best judgment on the situation, they stated that the continued agitation of the subjects of slavery and abolition would render it impossible for southerners to remain in the Church and still have access to the slave population for the purpose of giving them religious instruction. It would also be impossible to deal with the slaveholders. They affirmed that they had sought to have the decision in Bishop Andrew's case deferred until 1848 but had met defeat on that proposition.

It will be noted that, according to the "Plan of Separation," the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church depended upon the action of conferences in slaveholding states.¹⁹ In accordance with this provision and the suggestion of southern delegates, southern conferences took up the question as to whether or not they should send delegates to the Louisville Convention. The answer was almost unanimous in favor of the proposal. Much was said about the illegality of the proceedings in the case of Bishop Andrew and the necessity of a separate organization. That the conferences expressed the views of the lay members may be judged by the fact that the resolutions of local church organizations were almost entirely in favor of the southern contention.²⁰

With public opinion so solidly behind them, the delegates met May 1, 1845, at Louisville, Kentucky, not primarily to debate the issue but to arrange the form of the new church organization. The Convention was called to order by William Capers, while Lovick Pierce acted as temporary president.²¹ On the first day, attending bishops were invited to preside.²² Bishops Andrew and Soule readily agreed to do so. The latter said he realized that a separation was inevitable and that his influence had been used to bring about the division as peaceably as possible. He advised moderation in all their deliberations and a strict compliance with the "Plan of Separation."²³ Morris, who had spent two months just

prior to the Convention lecturing in Kentucky in an attempt to prevent disunion, and had come to Louisville for the same purpose, refused to comply with the request.²⁴ His refusal may have been due to the fact that he considered the prospect of continued union hopeless; it may have been due to his sensitiveness on a charge of slaveholding which had been brought against him.²⁵ At any rate, his endeavors at Louisville were entirely fruitless, except to involve him in trouble with leaders of his own Church.²⁴

The real work of the Convention was the division of the Church. A committee, consisting of two delegates from each annual conference, was ordered to consider the whole question and report to the Convention. They were later ordered to consider whether anything had transpired during the preceding year to make separation unnecessary; and whether a resolution should be adopted which would provide for reunion of the two branches of Methodism, should the northern Church meet the demands of the South. Finally, if the Committee believed that there was no probability that the northern Church would change its attitude towards slavery and the South, they were ordered to report in favor of division.²⁶ None of these resolutions seems to have excited much comment and they were adopted with almost no opposition.

The report of the "Committee on Organization" was in conformity with the sentiments expressed in the instructions of the Convention. They declared that it was "right, expedient, and necessary" to organize a new Church, which should be entirely separate from the Methodist Episcopal Church; and that the control of southern conferences by the General Conference of that Church was at an end. They favored retaining the same doctrines and Discipline by which they had previously been governed, except for verbal changes that might be necessary for another organization. They also provided for reunion with the northern Church, "whether such proposed union be *jurisdictional* or *connectional*."²⁷ Without discussion, apparently, these resolutions were adopted; the first with only three dissenting votes, and the second unanimously.²⁸

On the first day of the Convention, Bishops Soule and Andrew had been invited to preside over the body; May 19, they were requested to join the southern Methodists and act

as bishops of the newly organized Church.²⁸ In reply, Soule said he felt it his duty to carry on his work as it had been arranged by a meeting of bishops in New York. But he considered that he would be at perfect liberty to unite with the southern Church after the meeting of the first General Conference of that organization. The letter of Andrew to the Convention was an enthusiastic endorsement of all that had been done by that body, and an acceptance of the invitation which had been extended him.²⁹

Since Andrew was the only bishop of the Southern Church at this time, it was his duty to issue the first "Pastoral Address" to the people of that section. The Address noted the fact that the new organization had been demanded by ninety-five per cent of the Methodists of the South, and affirmed that most of the minority were not opposed to the majority, but lived in sections of the country where the conflict between slavery and abolitionism was not so acute. The work of the Convention was reviewed and declared very satisfactory. Attention was called to the trouble which might ensue on the border. This was deprecated as undesirable and un-Christian; and ministers and people were urged to restore as completely as possible the good fellowship which had obtained before the division took place. Only in organization, not in spirit, should there be a division between the two sections of Methodism.³⁰

The necessity of a separation of the Methodist Episcopal Church had been shown to the satisfaction of southern Methodists. That the organization of the new Church had been in accordance with the Plan of Separation is evident from the fact that the bishops of northern Church proceeded to re-arrange their "plan of visitation" so that Bishop Morris presided over northern conferences which had previously been assigned to Bishop Soule, while the latter took southern conferences over which Bishop Morris was to have presided.³¹ At the same meeting, which was held in New York, July 2, 1845, northern bishops declared that the report of the Committee of Nine was binding on them so far as their administration was concerned; and they proceeded to arrange for the border societies to declare their church preference.³² Thus, separation was recognized as "an accomplished fact."³³

The Louisville Convention had also made provision for the first General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church,

South, to be held at Petersburg, Virginia, May 1, 1846.²⁸ Since Bishop Soule had not yet formally joined the southern Methodist Church, he did not preside at the opening sessions.³⁴ But on the second day he expressed himself as greatly pleased with the course events had taken, and affirmed his adherence to the Church, South, in accordance with the right granted by the Plan of Separation. May 7, he was recognized as a bishop of the southern Church.³⁵

The problem which had been disposed of was as old as the Church itself. In the early years of Methodism, Asbury had been compelled to make a choice between an uncompromising stand against slavery and the consequent loss of southern support, on the one hand; and compromising with that which he considered, in the words of Wesley, "the sum of all villainies" and thereby keep the South within the fold of the Church. His decision was in favor of the latter course, and for half a century thereafter the South absolutely dominated the official action of Methodism. With the agitation which was begun by Garrison, Scott and other abolitionists, it became increasingly evident that Asbury's compromise could not endure. The Methodist Church began to disintegrate. The Wesleyans seceded, and in 1844 southern conferences were, by almost unanimous votes, given permission to organize a separate Church. This was done at Louisville and at Petersburg; and northern bishops not only made no objection but actually sanctioned what had been done. In all these arrangements, that which stands out most clearly is the apparently genuine Christian spirit which actuated leaders on both sides of the line of division.

1. Holdich, *Life of Wilbur Fisk*, p. 326.

2. *Supra*, p. 63.

3. *Supra*, p. 66.

4. *Supra*, p. 94.

5. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 249-50. Capers wrote: "As to secession or division, they are words which I have never permitted to come into my vocabulary. I almost feel like I am committing treason to write them here in my study. No calamity could so afflict me as to separate from the great body of our common Methodism. Life itself is not half so dear as is this union. If our brethren cut us off we must submit to it as the last of evils; but the sin shall be on their heads, not ours."

6. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 88-92.

7. *Debates in General Conference, 1844*, pp. 192-3; Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 96; Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 67; and Shipp, *Methodism in South Carolina*, pp. 492-3.

The plan was as follows:

"Be it resolved by the delegates of all the annual conferences assembled:

"That we recommend to the annual conferences to suspend the constitutional restrictions which limit the powers of the General Conference so far, and so far only, as to allow of the following alterations in the government of the Church, namely:—

"That the Methodist Episcopal Church in these United States and territories, and the republic of Texas, shall constitute two General Conferences, to meet quadrennially, the one at some place *south*, and the other *north* of the line which now divides between the States commonly designated as free States and those in which slavery exists.

"2. That each one of the two General Conferences thus constituted shall have full powers, under the limitations and restrictions which are now of force and binding on the General Conference, to make rules and regulations for the Church, within their territorial limits respectively, and to elect bishops for the same.

"3. That the two General Conferences aforesaid, shall have jurisdiction as follows:—The Southern Conferences shall comprehend the States of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, and the States and Territories lying southerly thereto, and also the republic of Texas, to be known and designated by the title of the 'Southern General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States.' And the Northern General Conference to comprehend all those States and Territories lying north of the States of Virginia, Kentucky, and Missouri, as above, to be known and designated by the title of the 'Northern General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.'

"4. And be it further resolved, That as soon as three-fourths of all the members of all the annual conferences voting on these resolutions, shall approve the same, the said Southern and Northern General Conferences shall be deemed as having been constituted by such approval; and it shall be competent for the Southern annual conferences to elect delegates to said Southern General Conference, to meet in the city of Nashville, Tennessee, on the first of May, 1848; or sooner, if a majority of two-thirds of the members of the annual conferences composing that General Conference shall desire the same.

"5. And be it further resolved, as aforesaid, That the Book Concerns at New York and Cincinnati shall be held and conducted as the property and for the benefit of all the annual conferences as heretofore:—the editors and agents to be elected once in four years at the time of the session of the Northern General Conference, and the votes of the Southern General Conference to be cast by the delegates of that Conference attending the Northern for that purpose.

"6. And be it further resolved, That our Church organization for foreign missions shall be maintained and conducted jointly between the two General Conferences as one Church, in such manner as shall be agreed upon from time to time between the two great branches of the Church as represented in the said two Conferences." It is to be noted that certain features of the plan have, in principle, been adopted by the two Methodist branches in the plans for reunion.

2. Debates in General Conference, 1844, p. 200. This declaration reads: "The delegates of the conferences in the slaveholding states take leave to *declare* to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, that the continued agitation on the subject of slavery and abolition in a portion of the Church—the frequent action on that subject in the General Conference,—and especially the extra-judicial proceedings against Bishop Andrew, which resulted, on Saturday last, in the virtual suspension of him from his office as superintendent,—must produce a state of things in the south which renders a continuance of the jurisdiction of that General Conference over these conferences inconsistent with the

success of the ministry in the slaveholding states." See also, Norwood, *Schism in the Methodist Church*, p. 84 for an explanation of the origin of the declaration.

9. Debates in General Conference, 1844, pp. 201-3.
10. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 96-7.
11. The personnel was: Paine, Winans, Crowder, Porter, Filmore, Akers, Hamline, Bangs and Sargent. The first three were southerners.
12. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 98. See also, Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 68.
13. Sutton, *Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 68.
14. Journal of General Conference, 1844, pp. 135-7. So important are these provisions that they are given in full:

"Whereas, a declaration has been presented to this General Conference, with the signatures of *fifty-one* delegates of the body, from thirteen Annual Conferences in the slaveholding states, representing that, for various reasons enumerated, the objects and purposes of the Christian ministry and church organization cannot be successfully accomplished by them under the jurisdiction of this General Conference as now constituted; and

"Whereas, in the event of a separation, a contingency to which the declaration asks attention as not improbable, we esteem it the duty of this General Conference to meet the emergency with Christian kindness and the strictest equity; therefore,

"Resolved, by the delegates of the several annual conferences in General Conference assembled.

"1. That should the Annual Conferences in the slaveholding states find it necessary to unite in a distinct ecclesiastical connection, the following rule shall be observed with regard to the northern boundary of such connection:—All the societies, stations, and Conferences shall remain under the unmolested pastoral care of the Southern Church; and the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church shall in no wise attempt to organize churches or societies within the limits of the Church South; nor shall they attempt to exercise any pastoral oversight therein; it being understood that the ministry of the South reciprocally observe the same rule in relation to stations, societies, and Conferences, adhering, by a vote of a majority, to the Methodist Episcopal Church; provided also, that this rule shall apply only to societies, stations and Conferences bordering on the line of division, and not to interior charges, which shall in all cases be left to the care of that church within whose territory they are situated.

"2. That ministers, local and travelling, of every grade and office in the Methodist Episcopal Church, may, as they prefer, remain in that church, or without blame, attach themselves to the Church South.

"3. Resolved, by the delegates of all the Annual Conferences in General Conference assembled, That we recommend to all the Annual Conferences, at their first approaching sessions, to authorize a change of the sixth restrictive article, so that the first clause shall read thus: "They shall not appropriate the produce of the Book Concern, nor of the Chartered Fund, to any other purpose other than for the benefit of the travelling, supernumerary, superannuated, worn-out preachers, their wives, widows, and children, and to such other purposes as may be determined by the votes of two-thirds of the members of the General Conference."

"4. That whenever the Annual Conferences, by a vote of three-fourths of all their members voting on the third resolution, shall have concurred in the recommendation to alter the sixth restrictive article, the Agents at New York and Cincinnati shall, and they are hereby authorized and directed to deliver over to any authorized agent or appointee of the Church South, should one be organized, all notes and book accounts against the ministers, church members, or citizens within its boundaries, with authority to collect the same for the sole use of the Southern Church; and

said Agents shall also convey to the aforesaid agent or appointee of the South all the real estate, and assign to him all the property, including presses, stock, and all right and interest connected with the printing establishments at Charleston, Richmond, and Nashville, which now belong to the Methodist Episcopal Church.

"5. That when the Annual Conferences shall have approved the aforesaid change in the sixth restrictive article, there shall be transferred to the above agents of the Southern Church so much of the capital and produce of the Methodist Book Concern as will, with the notes, book accounts, presses, etc., mentioned in the last resolution, bear the same proportion to the whole property of said Concern that the travelling ministers in the Southern Church shall bear to all the travelling ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church; the division to be made on the basis of the number of travelling preachers in the forthcoming Minutes.

"6. That the above transfer shall be in the form of annual payments of \$25,000 per annum, and specifically in stock of the Book Concern, and in Southern notes and accounts due the establishment, and accruing after the first transfer mentioned above; and until the payments are made, the Southern Church shall share in all the net profits of the Book Concern, in the proportion that the amount due them, or in arrears, bears to all the property of the Concern.

"7. That Nathan Bangs, George Peck, and James B. Finley be, and they are hereby appointed commissioners to act in concert with the same number of commissioners appointed by the Southern organization, (should one be formed,) to estimate the amount which will fall due to the South by the preceding rule, and to have full power to carry into effect the whole arrangements proposed with regard to the division of property, should the separation take place. And if by any means a vacancy occurs in this board of commissioners, the Book Committee at New York shall fill said vacancy.

"8. That whenever any agents of the Southern Church are clothed with legal authority or corporate power to act in the premises, the Agents at New York are hereby authorized and directed to act in concert with said Southern agents, so as to give the provisions of these resolutions a legally binding force.

"9. That all the property of the Methodist Episcopal Church in meeting-houses, parsonages, colleges, schools, Conference funds, cemeteries, and of every kind within the limits of the Southern organization, shall be for ever free from any claim set up on the part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, so far as this resolution can be of force in the premises.

"10. That the church so formed in the south shall have a common right to use all the copy-rights in possession of the Book Concerns at New York and Cincinnati, at the time of the settlement by the commissioners.

"11. That the Book Agents at New York be directed to make such compensation to the Conferences, South, for their dividend from the Chartered Fund, as the commissioners above provided for shall agree upon.

"12. That the Bishops be respectfully requested to lay that part of this report requiring the action of the Annual Conferences, before them as soon as possible, beginning with the New York conference."

15. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 98-101.

16. *Ibid.*, p. 102.

17. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 90.

18. *Ibid.*, pp. 90-92. Cf. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 129-34; and, *History of the Organization of the M. E. Church*, South, pp. 104-9.

19. *Supra*, p. 145. footnote 14; the first resolution.

20. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 92-8. Papers of both sections printed these resolutions. For the Holston conference, see *South-western Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 1;

November 1, 1844. For the Virginia conference see *Ibid.*, No. 6; December 6, 1844. For Tennessee conference, see *Ibid.*, No. 2; November 8, 1844. For South Carolina conference see Shipp, *History of Methodism in South Carolina*, pp. 496-7. For Kentucky conference see Redford, *Life and Times of Bishop Kavanaugh*, pp. 286-7.

For resolutions of local meetings see the following: *The Liberator*, Volume XIV., p. 113, cols. 3-4; July 19, 1844 and *Ibid.*, p. 134, col. 2; August 23, 1844. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XV., p. 154, col. 4; September 25, 1844. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 70, cols. 2 and 5; August 16, 1844—*Ibid.*, p. 74, cols. 5-6; August 23, 1844 and *Ibid.*, p. 78, cols. 4-5; August 30, 1844. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume VIII., pp. 14-15, 29, 31, 33; dates, July 5, August 2, August 2 and August 9, 1844, respectively. *South-western Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 7; December 13, 1844. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., pp. 95 to 141; August 15 to November 7, 1844.

21. *History of the Organization of the M. E. Church, South*, p. 169.
22. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-71.
23. *Ibid.*, p. 175. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 99-100.
24. Marlay, *Life of Bishop Morris*, pp. 220-21. Morris wrote: "I accomplished nothing, except, perhaps, to involve myself in suspicion on the part of my brethren of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Party prejudice proves often too strong for logic or facts. You may reason with a man's judgment, but not with his passions, either in the North or the South."
25. *Ibid.*, p. 213.
26. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 100.
27. *History of the Organization of the M. E. Church, South*, pp. 186-7. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 100-101, 123-37.
28. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 101.
29. *Ibid.*, p. 120.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-23.
31. Marlay, *Life of Bishop Morris*, p. 221.
32. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 102.
33. Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, pp. 99-100. The argument of Ridgeway is for the most part a defense of the southern Church. He seems to see in the documents nothing which is not present.
34. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, col. 545.
35. *Ibid.*, cols. 546-7.

CHAPTER XII

SOME DIFFERENCES OF OPINION

The division of the Methodist Episcopal Church had been accomplished with a minimum of official friction. Leaders of both churches had studiously avoided inflammatory speeches, and had sought to secure the division of Methodism without disturbing the cordial relations which had been maintained between the two sections of the Church for over half a century. Had it been a question for officials of the two churches to decide and administer, it seems entirely probable that a peaceable settlement would have been reached upon every point upon which there was a difference of opinion.

But evidence is not lacking that, while bishops and many ministers, both North and South, sanctioned a division of the Church as the best possible solution of an *impassé*, most ministers and people of both sections listened to appeals from those who voiced the opinions of their part of the country, or appealed to their prejudices rather than their reasons. One had only to mention Bishops Andrew and Soule, the Louisville Convention, or the General Conference of 1848, to precipitate a most exciting argument, which served only to increase ill-will.¹

The southern view of the General Conference action in the case of Bishop Andrew was an unequivocal condemnation of the body which had deposed him. From the session of Kentucky conference in September, 1844, to that of Alabama conference the following Spring, the chorus of censure proved beyond cavil that the South was a unit in their attitude towards slavery and abolition.² Mississippi conference approved the "conciliatory spirit" of the bishops who had attempted to compose the differences between the two sections;³ while Virginia conference declared that Bishop Andrew had "taken a noble stand upon the platform of constitutional law, in defense of the episcopal office and the rights of the South."⁴

It has been held by northern apologists that the people of the South were unduly influenced by their delegates to

the General Conference of 1844 and by their preachers in annual conferences which voted on the question of division. Without doubt, there is a measure of truth in the contention — delegates and ministers could not have been worthy to represent their constituents if they had not been leaders. But it is important to remember that, before the decision on the anticipated division of the Church had been made by the General Conference of 1844, resolutions had been adopted by many communities in the South which indicated that, if separation did not take place because of Andrew, southern preachers would lose their congregations. In the *Southern Christian Advocate*, accounts of thirty meetings were found, many of them held before the decision of the General Conference was reached, and all of which condemned the General Conference action and advocated the separation of the Church.⁵ The *Richmond Christian Advocate* also recorded resolutions of many assemblies which met for the same purpose.⁶ Extracts from resolutions of two such meetings will indicate the character of all. One group in Alabama said the action relative to Bishop Andrew was “unconstitutional, inexpedient, revolutionary in its tendency.”⁷ while another in Texas affirmed that he had been suspended “for no other cause than the gratification of the rabid appetite, the wild frenzy, and the infatuation of the prevailing epidemic of frantic abolitionism.”⁸

In direct opposition to the opinions of southern ministers and people were those of northern conferences. New England conference commended their delegates for “resisting the encroachments of Slavery upon our episcopacy and other ministry” and expressed the hope that this new stand foretold the time when the denomination would “be freed from all questionable connection with the ‘great evil’, and stand forth in its original purity in this respect.”⁹ Maine conference approved the General Conference action relative to Harding and Andrew,¹⁰ while Ohio conference declared that delegates who supported the Finley resolution which virtually deposed Bishop Andrew were deserving of the highest praise. The action of southern conferences and societies relative to Bishop Andrew was reviewed, and the people of the North urged to be patient in their dealings with the South. As for the separation of the southern conferences from the

Methodist Episcopal Church, that was considered "a consequence for which they alone" were "responsible."¹¹

The second event which was capitalized by the North in the attack upon the South was the invitation sent to Bishop Andrew by Bishop Soule. September 26, 1844, Soule wrote Andrew, inviting him to join him at Virginia conference, and also visit other southern conferences which had been assigned to Soule. In this letter he shows that he is in sympathy with the South on the slavery question, for he commended the General Conference action of 1836, by which both ministers and laymen were advised to refrain from discussing the slavery issue. November 4, 1844, Bishop Andrew replied. He cited the fact that the General Conference had indicated that he should not continue his work as bishop until he freed himself from slavery, and that the "plan of episcopal visitation was later drawn up and published without his name being subscribed thereto." He concluded that the other bishops considered it most prudent not to invite him to preside at any of the conferences and, not desiring to cause any unpleasantness, he had decided to absent himself from all such meetings. At the urgent request of many ministers of Kentucky conference, he agreed to attend the session of that body but was unable to reach the seat of the conference in time. Subsequent to that failure, he decided to return to his original purpose and refrained from attending Missouri and Holston conferences. It was his earnest desire that southern conferences should act on the question of division without being influenced by his presence, and he therefore determined to spend his time in slaveholding states in evangelistic endeavor. However, the letter of Bishop Soule induced him to change his mind, and he agreed to visit southern conferences in company with the former.¹²

The agreement between the two bishops was bitterly condemned by northern Methodist papers, especially the *Western Christian Advocate* and the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. It was contended that the bishops had acted contrary to the decision of the General Conference of 1844.¹³ This was undoubtedly true, for the action of that Conference relative to Andrew was mandatory and not advisory. But, on the other hand, it may be said that Andrew decided to visit Kentucky conference only after he had been invited to do so, and that he did not actually meet with any group of

ministers except in states where the result was unquestioned. The infraction of the "Plan of Separation" was therefore a sin against the letter of the law rather than its spirit.

The debate over Andrew soon degenerated into a wordy and acrimonious war between editors of the church papers. One southern paper accused Dr. Bond of seeking to stir up dissension in the Methodist Church,¹⁴ while another called him the New York "dictator."¹⁵ That ultra-abolitionists of the North considered that the New York editor was receiving condign punishment for his former compromising attitude towards slavery is apparent from Garrison's statement: "We are glad to see Dr. Bond getting his just deserts. He has long licked up the spittle of slavery with abject servility of spirit, and is now discarded with contempt by his old employers as no longer to be trusted."¹⁶

Dr. Elliott was also condemned for his attitude towards the separation of the Church. One writer referred to him as "our Cincinnati Cardinal."¹⁷ And a contributor to another southern paper suggested a solution for the wavering of Elliott on the attitude his Church should assume towards the new Church. He declared that the vacillation of Elliott was due to the precarious situation of the Western Book Concern, should the southern conferences form a separate organization. For, if Elliott should declare for the South, the North would forsake him; if he went with the West, then he would be spurned by both North and South; and in any event, the Book Concern would lose the patronage of many Methodists of the middle states. Finally he affirmed that Elliott was losing his mind."¹⁸

The bitterness between leaders of the South and those of the North was further kindled by the Louisville Convention of 1845. Naturally, southern delegates and their supporters were entirely satisfied with the work of the Convention. They were also fully convinced that they had scrupulously observed the terms and spirit of the Plan of Separation. Only one event marred the good feeling of delegates towards the North. Dr. Elliott attempted to interfere in the deliberations of that body and consequently the wrath of the southerners descended upon him.¹⁹

On the other hand, the action of the Louisville Convention and the part which Soule had taken therein were condemned by many in the North. Bond contended that, since Soule

presided over the southern Convention and showed himself in perfect accord with the plans and purposes of southerners, he had withdrawn from the Methodist Episcopal Church.²⁰ Representatives of many northern conferences asserted that they would not receive Soule as their presiding officer.²¹ One of these spokesmen for the North was Peter Cartwright. He asserted that, while his conference would receive Soule as a man and a Christian minister, they would not welcome him as a bishop. Relative to the action of the Louisville Convention, Cartwright wrote: "Goodby, my dear sirs, and may joy go with you, till you shall have reaped all the blessings of 'dividing' the Methodist Episcopal Church, which, indeed, is not a 'division' but an APOSTACY FROM THE GOOD AND RIGHT WAY OF OLD METHODISM. The members of this convention went home shouting, 'Victory' and crying, they were a 'co-ordinate branch of the Methodist Episcopal Church,' and if they were not this, they were 'the Methodist Episcopal Church proper.' But, my dear sirs, you will have to christen the brat again."²²

The bitter feeling between the two sections was accentuated by the action of the General Conference of 1848 on several questions which came before that body. May 10, Bishop Soule addressed a letter to the Conference, in which he complained of treatment accorded him by Dr. Elliott. The latter had written in the *Western Christian Advocate* that the bishop had withdrawn from the Methodist Episcopal Church "under grave charges, or liable to them." Elliott asserted that these charges "were officially laid in against him previous to the (Louisville) Convention."²³ Soule called on Elliott in the presence of four ministers and asked who had preferred the charges and who gave the information against him. Elliott replied that it was James B. Finley and that Finley had furnished Soule with a copy of the charges. This Soule denied and asked Elliott to retract his statements but the latter refused to do so. Soule requested a copy of the "grave charges", but failed at this point, also. Soule declared that he had never discovered the nature of the alleged charges. He therefore came to the General Conference to answer any indictment that might be preferred against him.²⁴ But the General Conference refused to accept the challenge and simply passed a resolution in which they asserted that they had "no jurisdiction over the Rev. Bishop

Soule" and therefore could "exercise no ecclesiastical authority over him."²⁵

One of the important events of this General Conference was the action taken relative to the proposal of the Church, South, to establish fraternal relations with the northern Church. Dr. Lovick Pierce, the official delegate of the former Church, presented his credentials to the General Conference and asked the wishes of that body. The Conference replied that, while they would be pleased to receive him as an individual, they could not receive him as a fraternal delegate, lest they should be understood to approve what the southern Church had done.²⁶ But Pierce refused to attend the Conference sessions except as the official delegate of the Church, South, and sent his final message in which he said the southern Church could never renew the offer of fraternization. The olive branch was extended, however, when he said that the northern Church might secure the restoration of fraternal relations at any time it desired, if it were done on the basis of the Plan of Separation.²⁷ After the rejection of Pierce, no southern minister crossed the bar of the Conference.²⁸

The resolution, rejecting Pierce, was of New England origin, and the West supported the radical section.²⁹ Gilbert Haven later declared that the southern Church was not recognized as a Christian Church "simply because of its submission to the Slave Power."³⁰ The attitude of the North was probably identical with that of Cartwright who, while paying a high compliment to Pierce as a man and a "Christian gentleman," also declared that the northern Church had been "caricatured, abused, slandered, and in every sense maltreated by the South" to such an extent that northerners could not be expected to vote in favor of fraternization. If the South would duly repent "and bind themselves to a Christian course in future," the northern Church would entertain the suggestion for fraternization.³¹

But if Cartwright considered that the Church, South, should repent in sackcloth and ashes, southerners maintained the same attitude towards the North. Over three years before, Kentucky conference had declared that if the "northern brethren" would "make suitable reparation for the past and afford satisfactory security for the future" then they would be glad to "hail them as brethren beloved, with whom we hold

it a privilege to live and die.”³² And the conviction of the South that the northern Church needed to repent was not weakened, but rather strengthened by events in the General Conference of 1848. After the rejection of Pierce, the editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* wrote that “the grave of the Plan of Separation and of the Property Question was dug when the body refused fraternal intercourse.”³³

Having dug the grave of the Plan of Separation, the General Conference proceeded to the burial. In 1844, the General Conference provided for a peaceable division of the Church; in 1848, the action of the previous Conference was reversed. The Committee on the State of the Church, of which George Peck was chairman, presented a report in which they attempted to prove that the Church, South, had broken its agreement and that consequently the Plan of Separation was no longer binding upon the northern Church. They asserted that the southern Church existed as a separate body solely by its own acts. They cited the fact that fifty-one members of the General Conference of 1844 had met in New York without any authority from the General Conference, and they also asserted that southern conferences had voted to hold the Louisville Convention without any sanction from the Methodist Episcopal Church. They added that Bishop Soule had invited Bishop Andrew to meet southern conferences — a proceeding which was declared to be contrary to the “Plan”. In the second place, the committee contended that southerners had not shown the necessity of a division of the Church, and that three-fourths of the members of the conferences had not voted in favor of a division of the Church funds. Further, they asserted that the southern Church had violated the territory of the northern Church and that southern leaders had given an interpretation of the Plan of Separation which was unwarranted by the document itself. Finally, since the southern Church had violated the Plan of Separation, those who had withdrawn from the Methodist Episcopal Church were considered secessionists, and the whole Plan declared null and void.³⁴ When the vote on the resolutions was taken, the report of the committee was overwhelmingly adopted.³⁵ Concerning this action, the attitude of the South was undoubtedly similar to that of Lee who wrote: “We had no tears to shed. The abuse of the

day before (relative to the rejection of Pierce) had dried up our sympathies."³⁶

Concerning the topics treated in the present chapter, several conclusions seem to be warranted. As might be expected, the two sections were diametrically opposed to each other on the action of the General Conference of 1844 relative to Bishop Andrew. Concerning the invitation of Bishop Soule to Bishop Andrew to accompany him on his visits to southern conferences, one is forced to the opinion, after a careful reading of both letters, that northern editors were looking for an opportunity to attack the southern Church and its leaders, rather than to put the best interpretation upon the correspondence. And when one reads the tirade of Cartwright on the Louisville Convention, he seeks in vain the motive for so brutal an onslaught. The same is true in relation to the General Conference of 1848, when the action of the previous Conference on the plan of separation was completely nullified. In all these controversies, due allowance must be made for the truth and for honest intentions. But, as will appear more clearly in succeeding chapters, one of the chief motives for the northern action was the retention of northern radicals, and especially New England conferences, within the Methodist Episcopal Church.

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1. These topics will be considered in the present chapter, while other problems, concerning which the discussion was still more acrimonious, will be reserved for succeeding chapters.
 2. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 92-120.
 3. *Ibid.*, pp. 108-9.
 4. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-11.
 5. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 129-34.
 6. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., pp. 95-141, *passim*.
 7. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 70, col. 2; August 16, 1844.
 8. *South-Western Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 7; December 13, 1844.
 9. *Minutes of the New England Conference*, 1845, pp. 12-13.
 10. *Minutes of the Maine Conference*, 1844, pp. 12-13.
 11. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 94, col. 5; September 27, 1844. Cf. *South-Western Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 1; November 1, 1844. Elliott was a member of this conference.
 12. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 137-9.
 13. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 159-68, 390-400.
 14. *South-Western Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 10; January 3, 1845.
 15. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 182, col. 5; April 24, 1846.
 16. *The Liberator*, Volume XIV., p. 134, col. 2; August 23, 1844.
 17. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 182, col. 5; April 24, 1846.

18. South-Western Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 14; January 31, 1845. This feeling against Elliott was general in the South. Lee, editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*, made the following suggestions when, in 1848, Elliott was authorized by the General Conference to write a history of the relation of Methodism to slavery:
 "While collecting materials for the work, it is indispensable that the author's *resentments be confined to a straightjacket*.
 "In arranging the plan of the work, and assorting the materials, it is absolutely essential to *keep the conscience well covered with a good blister plaster, powdered with tartar emetic*.
 "In the preparation of the work it will be necessary to *administer cooling and composing draughts from the fountains of truth, justice, and mercy to the imagination of the author*." (*Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume II, (New Series), p. 110, col. 5; July 13, 1848)
19. History of the Organization of the M. E. Church, South, p. 182. Elliott said the laymen of Louisville were favorable to the North.
20. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume XIX., p. 194, cols. 2-4; July 16, 1845.
21. For statements of leaders in Iowa, Illinois, Rock River and Ohio conferences see, Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 491-4; *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 86, cols. 3-4; September 12, 1845 and *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 118, cols. 1-4; September 25, 1845. Ohio conference, in 1845, actually refused to permit Soule to preside. Bishop Hamline extended the invitation but the conference voted, 145 to 7, to eject him from the chair. (*History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, pp. 240-41).
22. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 46, col. 4; July 4, 1845. Cf. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume II., (New Series), p. 62, cols. 1-2; April 20, 1848.
23. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 34, col. 5; June 12, 1846.
24. Journal of General Conference, 1848, pp. 135-6.
25. *Ibid.*, p. 47.
26. *Ibid.*, p. 21. Cf. Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, p. 112.
27. Journal of the General Conference of the M. E. Church, South, 1850, p. 190. The concluding paragraph of Pierce's message reads:
 "You will therefore regard this communication as final on the part of the M. E. Church, South. She can never renew the offer of fraternal relations between the two great bodies of Wesleyan Methodists in the United States. But the proposition can be renewed at any time, either now, or hereafter, by the M. E. Church. And if made upon the basis of the Plan of Separation, as adopted by the General Conference of 1844, the Church, South, will cordially entertain the proposition." The position of Dr. Pierce was made the rule of the Church, South, by a resolution presented by himself to the General Conference of 1850 of that Church. (*Ibid.*, pp. 188-95).
28. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume II (New Series), p. 82, col. 1; May 25, 1848.
29. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XIX., p. 79, col. 2; May 17, 1848. Cf. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XV., p. 90, col. 5; September 13, 1848. A correspondent said in regard to New England conference that they supported the General Conference on the fraternization question. "In reference to it they say good, good, GOOD! And by the way, they like to think that it refused fraternal relations with the Church, South, in consequence of the position which that body sustained to slavery. And this is unquestionably the fact in the case."
30. *The Liberator*, Volume XXXI., p. 52, col. 4; March 29, 1861.
31. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, p. 453. Cartwright's statement is as follows: "A better man and a better Christian gentleman the whole south did not afford than Dr. Pierce, their messenger on

this embassy; but the Methodist Episcopal Church was caricatured, abused, slandered, and in every sense maltreated by the South; and while they were wounded and bleeding at every pore, is it to be wondered at that this embassy failed, and that every single member of the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church of 1848 voted against fraternization? If they would undo the wrongs they had inflicted, and take back their hard speeches, and bind themselves to a Christian course in future, then, and not till then, could the Methodist Episcopal Church think of a Christian fraternization."

It is to be noted that nothing is said here about slavery.

32. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XI., p. 116, col. 6; November 8, 1844. The statement reads: "Now if our northern brethren will make suitable reparation for the past and afford satisfactory security for the future as expressed in our fifth conference resolution, then will we gladly hail them as brethren beloved, with whom we hold it a privilege to live and die; but short of this, the union as it now is could only be a *bond of discord*."
33. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), p. 82, col. 1; May 25, 1848. In the Pastoral Address of the General Conference of 1848, they said in regard to slavery and the relation between the two churches: "In the disposition of this subject, we can assure you that we have exercised all the wisdom and discretion that heaven had conferred upon us." (Journals of General Conference, 1848, p. 175).
- It must be admitted that little of either wisdom or discretion seems to have been conferred upon these delegates.
34. Journal of General Conference, 1848, pp. 154-64. Cf. Crooks, The Life of Matthew Simpson, p. 247. Crooks says that Simpson was chiefly responsible for the report which was adopted.
35. Journal of General Conference, 1848, pp. 80-85. Cf. Ridgeway, The Life of Bishop Janes, p. 111.
36. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), p. 90, col. 2; June 8, 1848.

CHAPTER XIII

THE BORDER WARFARE

By the provisions of the "Plan of Separation" the process, by which adherence of Methodists to either the northern or southern church was determined, was a simple one. In each case, the majority of "societies, stations, and Conferences" was to determine the membership of all. That is, no new conference or local church organization was to be formed by a minority, whether such minority favored the South or the North. On the basis of this agreement, ministers were permitted to associate themselves with either church "without blame." Such was the decision of the General Conference of 1844, which expressed the desire "to meet the emergency with Christian kindness and the strictest equity."¹

The General Conference action on the division of Methodism into two independent bodies stirred both Church and Nation profoundly. Yet some leaders of both organizations stood staunchly by the letter and spirit of the Plan of Separation. Elliott, editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* and later one of the most virulent traducers of the South, made an elaborate defense of the General Conference. Even the establishment of a fixed line between the two churches was justified because it was not only fair but similar to the arrangement between the Methodist churches of Canada and the United States. Elliott pointed out that many in the North were insinuating that southern Methodists were schismatics and seceders. This position, said he, could be due only to a determination not to abide by the General Conference decision. Such a repudiation was repugnant to Elliott, who declared in favor of two "independent, yet connected bodies." His conclusion was reached, not because he desired separation, but because he considered that it might be best, and further because he believed such a result unavoidable. He favored a peaceable division rather than war between southern and northern Methodists.²

The justness and fairness manifested by Elliott in this editorial on the border question was heartily reciprocated.

by southern leaders. In the "Pastoral Address" of the Louisville Convention, the desirability of peace was strongly emphasized. It was stated that the intense feeling aroused as a result of divergent opinions concerning Bishop Andrew and slavery had caused some to make statements which tended towards war rather than peace. But the Convention declared that there should be no commendation for any southern Methodist who did not seek to compose the difficulties which existed between the two sections of Methodism. Especially were southern Methodists in border territory urged to keep the peace in settling the problems peculiar to their section.³

That leaders of the northern Church also desired that the line of separation should be determined without bitterness and friction seems apparent from the action of the bishops at New York in July, 1845.⁴ In their opinion, societies voting on the question of adherence should have sufficient notice of the meeting held for that purpose and proper officers elected to forward the results to the majority's church officials.

Bishop Soule acted in strict conformity with the will of the Louisville Convention and the letter and spirit of the resolution passed by the northern bishops. Realizing that the only way to determine the adherence of border Methodists was to hold meetings for that purpose in conferences and societies, he called upon border churches in the southern parts of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois and Iowa to cast their votes for either the North or the South.⁵ Inasmuch as conferences south of the Ohio River had voted overwhelmingly in favor of the southern Church, it does not appear that Soule, though undoubtedly favorable to the South, was attempting to secure members by questionable methods. That this is the correct view of his action seems apparent from the letter which he wrote concerning the whole border situation. He denied with considerable emphasis the charge that he would use his influence in northern conferences in the interests of the southern Church and again stated his position in favor of perfect freedom of all Methodists to decide with which church they would associate themselves.⁶

The interpretation of Bishop Soule relative to border societies was immediately challenged by Elliott. The latter declared that, before a conference could separate from the Methodist Episcopal Church under the Plan, a majority of

all members must vote affirmatively and then a majority of the preachers of the conference must approve. "These *two* must unite. No one of them, without the other, can do the deed. And unless this double decision is to be had, the provisions of the plan cannot be available to them."⁷

That Elliott's interpretation was not in accord with that of northern bishops is evident from a letter written by Bishop Morris, September 8, 1845. He had been asked to meet with Missouri conference, apparently for the purpose of influencing a majority in favor of his Church. But he replied that he should be at Indiana conference at that time and therefore could not come. Believing it best to state his opinion of the border situation, Morris expressed his disapproval of the presence of two Missouri conferences, each claiming to be the true one, and said the majority should decide which Church should receive the property of the Book Concern. Any minister or layman who did not desire to belong to the Church of the majority had the privilege of uniting with some neighboring conference of the Church of his choice. The work of editors who sought to create difficulty on the border was severely condemned. "If the Plan of Separation had been carried out in good faith and Christian feeling on both sides, it would scarcely have been felt any more than the division of an annual conference."⁸

Two more important documents bear upon the question under consideration. The first is the official interpretation of the Plan of Separation by the General Conference of the southern Church in 1846, so far as it related to the border societies. It was agreed that, whenever the line of separation had been determined by stations adhering to the northern Church, no southern minister should be appointed to a charge north of that line. On two points they were particularly emphatic. They contended that the dividing line was not determined by the action of the first societies that voted, but that the question of adherence was simply transferred to the next tier of societies on the north. They admitted that the principle was equally applicable when the boundary line was being moved southward. Further, the southern Church held that circuits, composed of more than one society, should vote as circuits, and that societies of such a circuit which were not on the dividing line should be considered as integral parts of the circuit and not as interior charges.⁹

It is significant that this interpretation was not challenged by northern Methodist officials until the following year. March 3 and 4, 1847, the bishops of the Methodist Episcopal Church met at Philadelphia and set forth their interpretation of the Plan in relation to border societies and members. They accepted the line of division as final and declared that they would send no minister south of the line of separation. But they opposed voting on adherence by circuits, and conferences and societies were limited as to the time when their adherence should be fully determined.¹⁰ Further, the first vote taken on the question of church membership was to be considered final.¹¹

While there were differences of opinion between leaders of the two sections relative to the construction to be placed on the Plan of Separation — especially in regard to the voting of circuits — yet the purpose, for the most part, seems to have been to settle the whole border question fairly and peaceably. But the General Conference had made one important omission in the plan for the division of the Church. For, according to the Plan, no provision was made for minorities. Naturally, when a minority was composed of members who deliberately opposed the majority, they could be relied upon to refuse to fellowship with the dominant group. While some conflicts occurred in southern conferences, most of them were in slaveholding sections of northern conferences. Consequently, both churches, and especially the northern, were wrought up to the highest pitch of excitement.

Northern conferences at the eastern end of the line of division which were affected by border controversies were Baltimore, Philadelphia and Ohio. These conferences had territory located in slaveholding Virginia and Maryland, and difficulty was inevitable. Baltimore conference had voted unanimously to remain in the northern Church.¹² But, because it was located in states which supported many slaves, the brunt of the border warfare seems to have fallen upon it. Some stations voted to go with the Church, South, and the minorities refused to transfer their allegiance. The organization of two churches in the same community caused endless controversy.¹³ An attempt was made to draw off, not only Baltimore conference entire and unite it with the southern Church,¹⁴ but also the Virginia section of Philadelphia conference.¹⁵ Baltimore conference in 1848 considered the whole

question of division and adherence, especially as it was related to themselves. They declared that the line of division was "immovably fixed upon the northern boundary of the thirteen protesting Conferences" when the southern Church was formed; "and that therefore charges that were 'interior' then, remain so thereafter." Certain charges were pronounced 'interior', and the conference decided to resist any attempt to consider them part of the southern Church. Ministers of Virginia conference who were responsible for "aggressions" against the Virginia section of Baltimore conference were condemned because their action was considered "in violation of the provisions of the Plan of Separation and derogatory to the friendly relations that should always exist between different denominations of Christians."¹⁶

One of the chief points of controversy in this conference was at Alexandria, Virginia. Lee, editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*, was accused of visiting Alexandria in the interests of the southern Church. Whether or not that be true, the fact that a division had taken place at that point was published in the *Baltimore Sun*. When officers of the Church, South, took possession of the church building, adherents of the northern Church protested,¹⁷ and the case was carried to the courts, where Judge Tyler decided in favor of the northern Methodists. A new board of trustees was selected from these but a legacy of hatred remained as a result of the controversy.¹⁸

Ohio conference included the northwestern part of Virginia. For the most part, the stations seem to have voted to remain with the northern Church, but Parkersburg refused to receive the minister sent them because he came from Ohio. He was threatened and "advised" to leave the state, but finally returned and continued to serve those who refused to join the southern Church. Parkersburg, according to the northern interpretation, was not a border station and it was therefore believed to be a part of the northern territory.¹⁹ Not only was Parkersburg occupied but it was also charged that the whole Kanawha District, in which it was located, had been overrun by ministers sent out by Kentucky conference of the Church, South. The latter succeeded in organizing many societies for their Church, in communities where a northern church already existed.¹⁹

Probably that which caused the greatest excitement in

Ohio was the attempt of the southern Church to gain control of certain churches and sections of Cincinnati. The formerly deserted Vine St. Methodist Church became "Soule Chapel,"²⁰ with about sixty-five members, most of whom had withdrawn from Methodist churches in Cincinnati.²¹ Andrew Chapel was also built to accommodate another congregation of southern sympathizers. The objection of northern bishops to the occupancy of these two churches by ministers and members of the Church, South, was based on the contention that in each instance, there was a northern charge between the southern church and the Ohio River. Therefore, since this territory was 'interior' — as much so as if "it were in Columbus or Cleveland" — northern bishops held that the southern Church had violated the Plan of Separation.²² So intense was the feeling of northern Methodists in Cincinnati against those of the southern Church that preachers refused to invite southerners to preach in their pulpits — a proceeding which one writer said "must be regarded as an act of *unbrotherly hate*, of which no Christian should be guilty."²³

One of the most interesting and typical of these border conflicts was the famous "Maysville Case." There had been a division of the Methodist church at Maysville, Kentucky, following the General Conference of 1844. The Church, South, members claimed that they were in the majority and that the church property should be used exclusively by themselves. But a minority member, John Armstrong, who had contributed liberally when the building was erected, protested against the use of the church property by adherents of the southern Church, on the ground that the General Conference was incompetent to divide the Church. Each group claimed the exclusive use of the property. There was immediate difficulty when services by two different and conflicting organizations were announced for the same hour and day. To prevent strife, Armstrong had the building closed, but southern Church members undid his work and held a service.²⁴ Neither party was willing to withdraw in favor of the other, so resort was had to the courts. The first trial started September 30, 1845.²⁵ The decision of the judge was a compromise. Each group was permitted to use the building a proportionate share of the time, and since the number of members in each organization was almost the

same, he decided that each group should occupy the church on alternate Sundays.²⁶

This decision was unsatisfactory to both groups and the case was carried to the Kentucky Court of Appeals, of which Judge Marshall was chief justice. The chief contention of the northern faction was that trustees, members and preachers were required to belong to the "Methodist Episcopal Church" and "use the property under the rules and Discipline of the same Church." Whenever any one ceased to be a member of that Church, he ceased to have any claim upon the property of the same. Southerners claimed that each part of the Church was *a* Methodist Episcopal Church, and that the General Conference was fully competent to divide the Church into two separate organizations. They claimed that, according to the Plan of Separation, they had control of all church property in southern territory, and that that property was to be held by trustees for the benefit of southern members. But they held also that "the Church, in point of general jurisdiction" existed "no longer as a whole, though one in doctrine, faith, and Discipline."²⁷ Chief Justice Marshall decided that the Church undoubtedly had the right to divide, and that the General Conference was as competent in this instance as when Canadian Methodists separated from the Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States.²⁸ The decision was therefore in favor of the Church, South, and all similar cases in Kentucky would have a like result.²⁹

In Missouri conference the conflict was equally bitter. One southern paper urged the ministers to remain with the South,³⁰ and there may have been some need for exhortation. When the ministers met, a northern party seemed determined to hold a small number of northern members together for the purpose of keeping the Missouri conference share of the Book Concern dividends for the Methodist Episcopal Church. Bishop Morris had been invited to meet with them for the purpose of accomplishing this result but had refused to sanction their plans.³¹ When the votes on adherence were counted, there were only fourteen against the southern Church.³²

St. Louis was the center of the many local struggles in Missouri. June 10, 1845, seventeen members declared that they would refuse to identify themselves with the southern

Church. The editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* commended their action, saying: "Our brethren who remain in the Methodist Episcopal Church in St. Louis will be fostered and supplied by the Church. Let them be firm and immovable, and God will provide for them and all such."³³ But the northern society, under the leadership of the Rev. John Anderson, failed to thrive.³⁴ Probably for the purpose of furthering the interests of the northern Church, Elliott went to St. Louis. One leader gave it as his opinion that "there might be some tarring and feathering in restoring again Methodism in the South," but northern preachers were held responsible for such proceedings.³⁵ From this time forward, northerners were accused of sending "missionaries" who insisted on worming their way into southern territory in Missouri.³⁶

The General Conference of 1848 was called upon to aid the northern minorities of two St. Louis churches. The congregation of Wesley Chapel asked for aid because they had been deprived of their building by southerners. In answer, the Conference extended sympathy but declared that they had "no power to draw on the funds of the Book Concern to indemnify them for their losses." They urged that all such claims be presented when the final adjustment was made with the Church, South.³⁷

A second case which came before the General Conference involved the administration of Bishop Morris. Ebenezer church in St. Louis asserted that Bishop Morris had actually supported the southern Church and that a letter from him to Joseph Boyle, pastor of Centenary church in the same city, had been used to influence the vote of church members in favor of the southern Church.³⁸ The biographer of Bishop Morris declares that under the Plan of Separation the bishop had no right to appoint a minister to a congregation, when a majority had decided to adhere to the southern Church. He affirms that the only question involved in the case was whether or not Morris had actually written the letter to Boyle. This was soon disposed of by the latter who said he had never received such a communication.³⁹ The General Conference therefore decided that there was "no cause of complaint against the administration of Bishop Morris in that matter."⁴⁰

Even the Wyandott Indians of Kansas were not free from dissensions as a result of the division of the Methodist Church. The General Conference of 1848 received a petition from some of the Indians, asking that they be permitted to remain in the northern Church,⁴¹ and that they be re-imbursed to the amount of five hundred dollars, which had been used to erect a new church building. The Conference recommended that the Missionary Society pay this amount "provided the Methodists, in the above tribe of Indians, are recognized as belonging to the M. E. Church."⁴²

The petition of these Indians seems to indicate that already there had been an attempt to divide the Church. But it was not until September 1 of that year that the vote was taken and the decision rendered to adhere to the Church, South. An appeal was taken from this decision to Ohio conference by those who favored the northern Church.⁴³ October 22, Governor Walker recorded that a preacher had been appointed by Ohio conference to come to Kansas "and sneak about like a night burglar or incendiary to do *harm* and not *good*. What is it that religious fanaticism will not do? The seceders have stolen the church records." A week later, Mr. Still, the presiding elder of the northern Church was present and the question of division was again voted upon.⁴⁴ Again the southern Church was successful. October 30, adherents of the southern Church met and prepared a letter to the Indian Agent, in which they asked him to "keep out of our territory those reverend disturbers of the Nation." This exhibition of unbrotherly relations disgusted the non-Christian Indians who held a meeting, January 30, 1849 and decided that missionaries of both churches should be expelled. But Walker again defined the position of the southern Church and closed the meeting.⁴⁵

The General Conference of 1848 was especially noted for the repudiation of the Plan of Separation. And that this action, by which the proceedings of the General Conference of 1844 were declared null and void, was in large measure the result of the border warfare, there is no doubt. For, after having declared that there was no power in the General Conference "to pass any act which, either directly or indirectly, effectuates, authorizes, or sanctions, a division of said Church," they affirmed that no member of the Church could be deprived of the right to remain a member "unless

guilty of a violation of its rules." This right was safeguarded by the Discipline itself, which guaranteed all members and ministers the right of appeal, so that if a member were separated from the Church by any other method, it was contrary to "the constitutional rights and privileges of the membership and ministry."⁴⁶ Having thus acted on the pronouncement of the previous General Conference, they decided to recognize all as belonging to the northern Church, who were members in 1844 and did not desire to join the southern Church. They regarded it as their "duty, as far as practicable, to supply all such with the preaching and ordinances of the Gospel."⁴⁷

The division of border societies had been accomplished only after the most bitter controversies. For, while leaders on both sides desired an equitable adjustment of border difficulties during the first year after the division of the Church was provided for,⁴⁸ it was impossible to avoid strife in local churches. By 1848, even northern bishops were willing to present to the General Conference a list of infractions of the Plan of Separation by the southern Church. The General Conference proceeded to repudiate what the Conference of 1844 had done. Not only that, but they determined to protect those members who desired to remain under their jurisdiction, even though they might be in the territory of the Church South. That is, the door was opened even wider for controversy and hatred and persecution. So far as can be determined, there were only 2,735 Methodists in southern territory who were dissatisfied with the arrangements made in 1844. It is one of the ironies of history that the Church which, in 1848, was so emphatic in its decision to protect the rights of minorities, was equally determined in 1861 that the southern minority, of which southern Methodists formed a considerable part, should not have the privilege of self-determination.

1. *Supra*, p. 145, footnote 14, preamble 2.

2. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 94, col. 5; September 27, 1844. Elliott's statement is as follows:

"The part of the proposed plan which provides that no intrusion shall take place by the two Churches across the line of division, after it shall have been defined, seems particularly obnoxious to many in the north. Yet it is precisely such a regulation as exists between the Methodist Episcopal Church and the British Methodists. The refusal to observe this must arise from the consideration, that our southern brethren act the part of schismatics in withdrawing, or rather seeking an independent organization. For

ourselves, we are now unwilling to consider them either as schismatics or even as seceders from the Methodist Episcopal Church, and we shall *continue so to think and act* until we are compelled by the necessity of the case to think and act otherwise. It would much better suit our views, could it be done, that the *Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States* would be fairly divided into two great independent, yet connected bodies, to be entitled, the *Methodist Episcopal Church in the United States in the north*, and the *Methodist Episcopal Church in the South*.

"We write not these things because we are in favor of separation, as some may suppose. We are not in favor of separation now, nor for the causes on account of which it may now take place. Yet we believe the time may come, and is not distant, when a division of the Methodist Episcopal Church may be as Scripturally, and as properly made, as that classes, circuits, districts, and conferences may be divided. And though there may not be sufficient reasons for such a division without schism, yet if there be such reasons as a large number believe to be sufficient, even in this case, it is a grave matter to decide what is best to be done."

For objections to a fixed line of separation, see the report of North Ohio conference in *Ibid.*, p. 89, cols. 4-5; September 20, 1844 and *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XV., p. 162, col. 2; Year, 1844.

3. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 122-3. The paragraph pertinent to our study at this point is as follows:

"It had been too much to expect, considering the weakness of men, suddenly aroused to resistance, as the Southern Churches were, by the unlooked-for action in the cases of Bishop Andrew and brother Harding, there should not, in some instances, have escaped expressions of resentment and unkindness. Or that, put to the defense of the majority of the General Conference, where the evil complained of was so serious, the advocates of that majority should not sometimes have expressed themselves in terms which seemed harsh and unjust. We deeply deplore it, and pray that, for the time to come, such exhibitions of a mortifying frailty may give place to Christian moderation. We invoke the spirit of peace and holiness. That brother should be esteemed as deserving best, who shall do most for the promotion of peace. Surely this is a time of all others, in our day, when we should seek and pursue peace. A continuance of strife between North and South must prove prejudicial on both sides. The separation is made — formally, legally made — and let peace ensue. In Christ's name let there be peace. Whatever is needful to be done, or worth the doing, may be done in peace. We especially exhort brethren of the border conferences and societies, to forbear each other in love, and labor after peace. Let every one abide by the law of the General Conference, with respect to our bounds, and choose for himself with Christian temper, and permit others to choose without molestation, between North and South. Our chief care should be to maintain 'the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.' Methodism, preserved in what makes it one the world over — the purity of its doctrines, the efficiency of its discipline, its unworldliness, its zeal for God, its self-devotion — is of infinitely greater value than a question of boundary or General Conference jurisdiction merely."

That peace was desired by southern leaders is further shown by a letter of Bishop Capers to a presiding elder: "What you say concerning border societies, deeply interests me. What have we to do with 'War?' 'Border war.' It is all of the Devil, first and last; a war in which he that fights hardest serves Satan best. It is not thus that we serve Christ. I am so deeply impressed with the conviction, my dear Moorman, that if even you were to turn a man of war, I should not hesitate to remove you from your District." (*Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 170, col. 2; April 2, 1847) Capers was elected bishop in 1846.

4. *Supra*, p. 142.
5. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 74, cols. 5-6; August 22, 1845. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 75, cols. 2-3.
6. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 95, col. 1; August 14, 1845. In a letter to Bishop Andrew, dated, July 15, 1845, he says that he had formerly made the statement: "Guard well the outposts." He said he might be suspected of policy, but that he meant simply that the resolutions of the General Conference of 1844 should be strictly observed. "These resolutions carried out in the spirit of Christian forbearance and kindness, especially with the joint aid of the Editors on both sides of the line would soon produce peace, and quietness, and mutual Christian confidence in all these borders The pestiferous insinuations that if I attend Northern Conferences I would employ my influence to induce preachers and members to change their side of the line, and the suspicion of 'policy' in my resolution to attend those Conferences so situated, being in my official division of the work, is worthy of the morbid source from which it emanated. Ministers, local and travelling, of every grade and office in the M. E. Church, and all the border stations and societies on both sides, should be perfectly free to remain as they are, North or South, or being on the one side, to adhere to the other. And in either case, not even the slightest suspicion of 'blame' should be attached to any one. This is the letter, and spirit and design of the plan of separation."
7. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 74, cols. 5-6; August 22, 1845. Relative to Elliott, Soule wrote: "I assure you that nothing has given me more pain since the close of the last General Conference, than the recent proclamation, by the *Western Christian Advocate*, of an undying warfare against the South." (*Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 98, col. 6; August 21, 1845). The changing attitude of Elliott towards the South probably was a result of the bitterness which was being stirred up against that section in the North.
8. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 294. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 142.
9. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 152-3.
10. "For Conferences to the time of their next session after the organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and for stations and Societies to the time of the first session of their respective Annual Conferences subsequent to said organization."
11. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 153.
12. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 11, col. 1; May 1, 1846.
13. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 293.
14. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 173, cols. 1-6; January 1, 1846. Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 197, cols. 1-6; February 12, 1846 and *Ibid.*, p. 201, cols. 1-3; February 19, 1846.
15. *Virginia Sermon Pamphlets*, Volume 2—An address to the People of the County of Accomac by George P. Scarburgh and 15 others.
16. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, pp. 291-2.
17. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XVI., p. 94, cols. 5-6; June 13, 1849.
18. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 710-11. This trial was held in 1850. It illustrates as well as any other the character of the controversies in that section. For an illustration of a somewhat different character, see Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, pp. 132-5.
19. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 217. Cf. *Journal of General Conference*, 1848, p. 168; and *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., No. 1; October 31, 1845. The editor of the *Pittsburg Christian Advocate* (Volume XII., p. 165, col. 5; November 5, 1845) favored permitting the southern Methodist Church to come to Parkersburg, even though it were north of the line of separation and contrary to the Plan of Separation.

20. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 50; October 10, 1845.
21. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume XIII., p. 138, cols. 5-6; October 30, 1845.
22. Journal of General Conference, 1848, pp. 168-70. See also, Sutton, The Methodist Church Property Case, pp. 218-19.
23. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., No. 28; May 8, 1846. This rebuff may have been responsible for the same writer's libel on the women of the North:
 "Up here they do not look like our ladies. The *tout ensemble* of their physical form, bating the *features* of the face, is not altogether unlike that of Cherokee females. Their dresses are badly fitted to their labor-worn and flattened frames. Their arms and fingers are disproportionately long, their hands large, and knuckles look swelled and wrinkled; their countenance is woe-begone, flat and cold . . . With all the rouge and white lead with which they bedaub their faces, and all the festoons of curled hair from the dead with which they crown themselves, I feel sorry for them." (Western Christian Advocate, Volume XIII., p. 23, col. 2; May 22, 1846). The writer, one Hanner, was a delegate to the first southern General Conference.
24. Quarterly Review, Volume I., p. 546; Year, 1847. A part of the statement is as follows:
 "The opposing claims of the two parties were brought into immediate conflict, by appointments made and published, under different authorities, for preaching and divine worship, at the same hour of the same day, and in the same church, by two different preachers, for each of whom the parties respectively claimed the use of the pulpit. To prevent collision and with the intent that the house should not be occupied at all, on the day referred to, John Armstrong, one of the original trustees to whom the lot had been conveyed, and holding also other official stations in the collective church at Maysville, and being the representative of one of the contending parties, had the house fastened up; but other and more numerous officers and trustees of the other party, had the doors opened, and occupied the church, with their preachers."
25. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., No. 1; October 31, 1845.
26. *Ibid.*, No. 14; January 30, 1846.
27. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 613-16. Elliott says that the Maysville Church decided unanimously, at first, for the northern Church.
28. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), p. 44; March 16, 1848.
29. Quarterly Review, Volume I., pp. 546-89; 1847. See also, Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), pp. 36-48, *passim*; March 2-23, 1848. In each source, the entire decision is given. It may be that this decision influenced the southern Church to more fully protect the rights of its members. At any rate, the "Methodist Expositor and True Issue" was established in Cincinnati about 1848 for the distinct purpose of presenting the case of the Church, South, along the Kentucky border. (Redford, Life and Times of Bishop Kavanaugh, p. 331).
 Elliott (The Great Secession, cols. 617-18) wrote: The decision of the Judge is not one founded on the principles of the common law; but is one founded on the theory introduced by Church revolutionists, the adoption of which would scatter to the winds the tenure of all religious and charitable trusts." It will be seen that the advocates of each side had little confidence in decisions of the courts, when they were opposed to their own desires.
30. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 22; March 28, 1845.
31. Myers, The Disruption of the M. E. Church, pp. 118-20.
32. Sutton, The Methodist Church Property Case, pp. 142-3.

33. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume XIX., p. 186, col. 4; July 2, 1845. The activities of this and the Western Christian Advocate were responsible for attempts to forbid these papers to circulate in the South. (Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church, pp. 140-41).
34. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XI., No. 4; November 20, 1846. On the other hand, the editor of the same paper (under a different name) declared that the southern church was prospering in spite of the Cincinnati and New York Advocates. (Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., No. 17; February 20, 1846).
35. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XI., No. 7; December 11, 1846.
36. Ibid., Volume XIII., No. 3; November 17, 1848. Cf. Ibid., Volume XIV., No. 50; October 11, 1850.
37. Journal of General Conference, 1848, p. 116.
38. Ibid., p. 55. Cf. Marlay, Life of Bishop Morris, pp. 230-32.
39. Marlay, Life of Bishop Morris, p. 232. It seems strange that Ebenezer church would have made such a charge if it were not true. To any unbiased person it is apparent that the two statements are absolutely opposed to each other. Somebody lied.
40. Ibid., pp. 232-3.
41. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 645-6.
42. Journal of General Conference, 1848, p. 68.
43. Kansas Historical Collections, Volume IX., pp. 217-19. For an opposite statement see Ibid., Volume X., p. 215 and also a Manuscript copy of at least part of the proceedings, in Bishop Hamline's correspondence at Garrett Biblical Institute. It seems impossible to harmonize the two accounts, but it is to be noted that, according to the manuscript account, only about twelve voted to remain in the northern Church. Either account shows conclusively that the welfare of the Indians was not the primary consideration.
44. That is, the first vote was *final* when favorable to the North.
45. Kansas Historical Collections, Volume IX., pp. 217-19.
46. Journal of General Conference, 1848, pp. 73-5. No more than six votes were cast against any of these resolutions.
47. Journal of General Conference, 1848, p. 117.
48. Southern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 170, col. 2; April 2, 1847. Cf. Pittsburg Christian Advocate, Volume XII., p. 126, col. 3; August 27, 1845. The editor's statement is: "And our chief regret now is, not that separation has taken place, but that it has not been effected peaceably, as was contemplated in the plan adopted by the General Conference. Both sides cast the blame on each other, of the bad feelings which had been engendered. Heaven knows we are both at fault."

Professor Norwood has some additional illustrations of this unchristian border strife in his "Schism in the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1844," pp. 126-46.

CHAPTER XIV

THE DIVISION OF THE BOOK CONCERN PROPERTY

The General Conference of 1844 had recommended to annual conferences the suspension of the Sixth Restrictive Article so that the Book Concern property might be divided. When this permission was granted by annual conferences, division of the property was fully provided for. Commissioners representing the northern Church were appointed to negotiate with southern commissioners.¹

The success of the plan for the division of the Church property seemed assured when northern conferences began to indicate their attitude. New York conference concurred in the proposed change, 143 to 38;² Troy conference approved, 123 to 6;³ while Providence conference cast a unanimous affirmative vote.⁴ At least four other conferences were overwhelmingly for the change of the Sixth Restrictive Article and the consequent division of the Church property.⁵

But while some northern conferences desired an equitable division of the property, others did not. The fact that most of the concurring conferences cast their votes soon after the adjournment of the General Conference leads one to suspect that influence was brought to bear upon the rest for the purpose of defeating concurrence. The evidence supports the suspicion. The editor of *Zion's Herald*, in July, 1844, suggested that the decision on the change of the restrictive article be deferred until the following year. He also raised the question whether northern conferences had a moral right to vote affirmatively. He hinted that New England conferences had the power and might use it to prevent peaceable division.⁶

While several conferences recorded a negative vote on changing the Sixth Restrictive Article, they maintained, outwardly at least, the most cordial attitude towards the southern Church. Baltimore conference declared that their vote for non-concurrence was not due to any opposition to an equitable division of the Church funds.⁷ North Indiana conference said they had "no desire to withhold from our

southern brethren any portion of the property of the church that may justly belong to them," but that they were influenced "by motives wholly apart from and above pecuniary considerations."⁸ A majority of the delegates from Illinois conference to the General Conference of 1844 had voted in favor of the Plan of Separation. But the division among the delegates is suggestive of the struggle in that conference. Stamper and Berryman advocated concurrence while Peter Cartwright set himself to the task of defeating the measure. It was undoubtedly due to the exertions of Cartwright that the conference refused to accept the proposal of the General Conference.⁹ But they did agree that if a division of the Church were decided upon by the Louisville Convention, the southern Church should have "their full share of the funds, provided they do not alter the Discipline in any material way."¹⁰

With the exception of the ten conferences which have been considered, northern conferences seem to have been opposed to any concession to the southern Church. New Jersey conference voted 103 to 2, against a change of the Sixth Restrictive Article.¹¹ Maine¹² and North Ohio conferences postponed action on the proposed change, the latter on the ground, that there was no power to divide the Book Concern Funds and that it was unnecessary.¹³ Due possibly to the warmth of feeling over southern attacks on Bond, Indiana conference voted, 76 to 2, against the change.¹⁴

Ohio and Philadelphia conferences were real surprises to southern Methodists. All Ohio delegates to the General Conference of 1844 had voted in favor of suspending the sixth article. Hamline was a member of the "Committee of Nine" and Elliott moved the adoption of the resolutions and spoke in their favor. But in the annual conference of 1844 only one affirmative vote was cast.¹⁵ Philadelphia conference voted, 104 to 12, against the proposal.¹⁶ This action from a conference which had slaveholding territory within its boundaries drew the following attack from the editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*: "We rejoice that there are twelve men in the Philadelphia conference ready to extend even-handed justice to their southern brethren. Ten righteous Lots would have saved Sodom; twelve generous and honest men shall protect the Philadelphia conference from any censure of ours."¹⁷

When the votes were counted it was found that southern conferences had cast 971 votes for and 3 against the General Conference recommendation; while in northern conferences there were 1164 undeniably affirmative and 1067 negative votes. Therefore, there were 2135 affirmative and 1070 negative votes.¹⁸ Since the Constitution of the Church required a three-fourths majority, annual conferences had defeated the plan for a peaceable division of the Church property.¹⁹

The editor of *Zion's Herald* considered that the vote of annual conferences was final.²⁰ But there were others who took a different view of the situation. One editor said he knew of no one in all his territory who desired a division of the Church,²¹ but he urged that a settlement of the question be reached before the convening of the first General Conference of the Church, South, so that relations between the two churches might be more cordial.²² And a contributor to the *Western Christian Advocate* believed there were considerations higher than the mere letter of the law. He admitted that the three-fourths vote had not been obtained, but cited — what is undoubtedly the fact — that many northern conferences had refused to vote for the change lest they should seem to encourage division. He pointed out that many conferences had declared their willingness to divide the Church funds if a division actually took place. His reasons for an equitable division of the Church funds were similar to those used by the counsel for the southern Church when the case was carried to the courts: (1) that the public would demand that they remain true to their promises; (2) that the Book Concern money had come as a result of sacrifices by all the preachers, North and South; (3) that when the Book Concern building at New York had burned in 1836, the South contributed large sums to rebuild it; (4) that the bishops had recognized the Plan of Separation as in force; and (5) that widows and orphans of southern ministers had a valid claim on the earnings of the Book Concern.²³

The first reaction of southerners to the decision of the northern Church was a determination to have peace whether or not they received their share of the Church property. One writer commented on the change in tone of some northern papers during the year following the General Conference of 1844, and protested that "Church dignities, money

and such like, must form no part of this dispute.”²⁴ The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* asserted that “more of character, influence and usefulness would be lost by thus attempting to recover our property than would be compensated by the possession of a thousand fold more property than is involved in the dispute. Let it go. Let it fulfil its mission of unrighteousness, and work out its consummation of misery in the hands of those who wrest it from its rightful owners.”²⁵ And another editor, referring to the action of Ohio conference, declared: “If this, or any other conference, wish to pocket that portion of the Book Concern and ‘Charter Fund’ that justly belongs to us — and to drive us off by unjust legislation, or any unholy administration of the law, we envy them neither their piety nor the position they will occupy in the eyes of the Christian world.”²⁶

With the failure of northern conferences to suspend the sixth restrictive article, the hope of southerners for a peaceable division of the Church property was destroyed, even though a majority of northern preachers approved such a division.²⁷ When the Book Committee of New York decided not to pay dividends to any annual conference until 1848, when the General Conference would meet, the decision was considered by southerners a nullification of the Plan of Separation.²⁸

The first General Conference of the Church, South, appointed three commissioners to represent them on the property issue. They were given full power to settle the whole question in conjunction with the commissioners who had been appointed by the northern Church.²⁹ August 25, 1846 they notified the northern commissioners that they were ready to meet them for the purpose of dividing the Church property. In this communication the southern commissioners attempted to show that a constitutional majority of the ministers had declared in favor of suspending the Sixth Article. They held that conferences which did not vote at all should either be counted on the affirmative side or not at all. In either case, they asserted that three-fourths of the ministers had favored the plan of dividing the funds. Finally, they urged that a settlement be made peaceably so that an appeal to the courts would be unnecessary.³⁰

October 14, 1846, the northern commissioners replied. They protested that they had no authority to act, inasmuch as they had not been officially notified that three-fourths of the ministers had voted to change the Sixth Restrictive Article, and they had no power to demand of conference secretaries the results of the vote on this question. They therefore refused to act on the division of the Church property.³¹ Their reply was in perfect accord with the statement of Bishop Hedding, made a year later, in which he said that the General Conference had no right to accede to the demands of the South until three-fourths of the ministers had agreed to the change and the following General Conference had sanctioned the proposed division of the property. Even then he expressed doubts as to the constitutionality of the proceedings.³²

A further attempt seems to have been made by southerners to secure their share of the Book Concern property from the northern commissioners. But Finley, for the North, refused to accede to the demands of the southern Church. As reasons for his refusal he assigned the following: (1) The annual conferences had refused to authorize a division of the property so the commissioners had no power to act. (2) Northern commissioners were not given authority by the General Conference to decide whether a sufficient number of votes had been cast in favor of a division by the annual conferences. (3) Secretaries of annual conferences were not bound to state the official vote and some of them dared not to do so without permission. (4) "The South have not complied with the conditions on which such a division was to be made. Provided the annual conferences had agreed to alter the sixth restrictive article, they did not find the *necessity* of their secession, or withdrawal from the Methodist Episcopal Church." The necessity for division must be determined by a vote of all the members of all the societies in circuits and stations, and this had not been done.³³ Such an interpretation of the Plan of Separation very properly called forth the condemnation of the South.³⁴ Had Finley been content to rest his case on the action of annual conferences, he might have had reasonable ground for rejecting the overtures of the South. But the other statements seem to be nothing more than mere subterfuges, designed to keep the funds of the Church for the North by fair or foul means.

The action of northern conferences on the election of delegates to the General Conference of 1848 was indicative of the attitude which that body would assume on the division of the Church property. Illinois³⁵ and Ohio conferences were opposed to the Plan and considered it a nullity.³⁶ In some of the conferences the issue was squarely raised and new and younger men sent to Conference. Thus, in New York conference, Bangs, Olin and Levings were not elected "because it was supposed that they were in favor of a just division of the Church property, between the North and the South."³⁷ Lee wrote from Pittsburg, the seat of the General Conference, that most of the former members had been excluded because they desired an equitable and peaceable division of the property.³⁸ Of those who were members of the General Conference of 1844, only forty-one were returned in 1848.³⁹

May 11, 1848, the southern commissioners sent an address to the General Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in which they stated the failure to settle the property question and asked that the Conference seek a solution. To this statement no direct reply was made.⁴⁰ A week later, the southern commissioners wrote, asking the northern commissioners whether they considered themselves authorized to act; and if not, if they had anything to propose to secure a settlement according to the Plan of Separation. Ten days later, Peck and Finley replied that they did not deem themselves authorized to act, since annual conferences had failed to consent to the division of the property; and that they had nothing to propose.⁴¹

But the Property Question was not ignored by the Conference. Early in the sessions, the Committee on the State of the Church was asked to "to inquire into the propriety and expediency of offering to refer the above question to disinterested arbiters, to be chosen by the parties, for amicable adjustment, and report thereon"⁴² In answer to this request, the Committee declared that, without the consent of the annual conferences, they had no authority to enter into arbitration with the commissioners of the Church, South, in regard to the "claims set up by them to a division of the vested funds of the Methodist Episcopal Church".⁴³

For the purpose of bringing about a settlement with the Church, South, the Conference instructed the commissioners

who had been appointed in 1844 that if, after having sought the opinion of eminent counsel, they should discover that they could "legally and constitutionally" submit the dispute to arbitration, they should do so and abide by the decision. If the southern commissioners started suit in the courts, they were authorized to submit the dispute to arbitration under the direction of the court before which they might appear. If no suit were begun and arbitration were found to be impossible, "The General Conference being exceedingly desirous of effecting an amicable settlement of said claim," voted to ask the annual conferences to suspend the sixth restrictive article so that arbitration might be possible.⁴⁴

That the General Conference intended to settle the dispute on the basis of justice and equity seemed improbable to the southern Church. Lee declared that the resolutions had been passed "merely to turn the current of public opinion setting in so strong against the Conference." In his opinion, the General Conference had acted "mainly with a view to propitiate common scorn and public indignation." He assured his "contemporaries in and out of the Church that the action of the General Conference in this matter richly deserves to be classed with the things known among men as solemn farces! We have not the first idea that a desire existed in the body to meet this great question on Christian principles. Individuals may have felt so; but there was nothing like it in the body."⁴⁵ Another editor linked the rejection of Pierce as the fraternal delegate of the southern Church with the unwillingness of the Northern Church to divide the property. His interpretation of the Conference action was as follows: "We have your money and wish to keep it; if you will, like good Christians, allow us to keep it all, and make no ado about it - that is, pay us, as the price of our friendship, some \$250,000 we will readily and cordially fraternize with you; but should you be so unreasonable as to ask your own, and especially should you attempt to coerce it out of us, it will be impossible to recognize you as a legitimate branch of the Methodist family."⁴⁶

Since 1844, demands had come from the South for an equitable share of the Church property.⁴⁷ September 29, 1847, Kentucky conference passed a resolution favoring the prosecution of the northern Church in order to obtain the South's share of the common funds.⁴⁸ Following the General Con-

ference of 1848, Tennessee conference took similar action.⁴⁹ But nothing was officially done until after the declaration of the northern commissioners that they had sought legal advice and had decided that they had no power to act with the southern representatives.⁵⁰ The answer of the Church South, was to start two suits against the Methodist Episcopal Church,⁵¹ one at New York, June 13, and one at Cincinnati, July 12, 1849. Both cases were heard by the United States Circuit courts.⁵²

The New York case occupied the attention of the Court for ten days, and the Judges' decision was favorable to the southern Church. The chief contention of the counsel for the northern Church was that the conferences had not given the necessary three-fourths vote to change the Sixth Restrictive Article and that therefore the General Conference was unable to proceed farther, even if there were the desire to do so. But the counsel for the plaintiffs established to the Court's satisfaction that the funds of the Church had been accumulated as a result of the labors of preachers of all conferences and that the dividends from the Book Concern belonged to the beneficiaries, although distributed by the conferences. The dividends could not be taken from the retired ministers, their wives and children unless it were shown that they had not kept the conditions under which they received a portion of the Book Concern's earnings.⁵³

When the argument had been completed, Judge Nelson suggested that "it would be much better for the interests of this Church, for the interests of all concerned, if, after a full and fair investigation, both of the facts and the law of the case, the parties could amicably take it up, and, by the aid of friends and counsel, come to an amicable decision of the controversy."⁵⁴ Thereupon, the northern commissioners proposed that the whole question be arbitrated. The southern commissioners were willing, provided the northerners would "admit their claim to a full share of the property in question," and arbitrate only the amount of property to be turned over to them. This proposal was rejected, and the negotiations ended in failure. November 11, 1851, the decision of Judge Nelson, directing a pro rata share of the property to be given the southern Church, was handed down.⁵⁵

Northern leaders were much chagrined at the result. The *Michigan Christian Advocate* defended the northern Church

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by saying that it was "about as easy 'for a camel to go through the eye of a needle', as for justice to secure her rights when the rapacious maw of the slave interests yawns to receive them."⁵⁶ Parsons said Simpson had "called out that same old park of artillery which, for the last six years, has been thundering from the battlements of abolitionism against the Methodist Episcopal Church South, and has bid it speak in contravention and impeachment of the late decision of the United States Circuit Court. We believe this suit is the first instance, in the history of our country, when any of our high courts have been gravely charged with corruption, or had their opinions arraigned before the people."⁵⁷

The Cincinnati case, decided in July, 1852, was a victory for the northern Church. The Maysville Case was used as a precedent to show that the General Conference had the power to divide the Church and that the funds of the Book Concern were held for the benefit of the worn-out preachers, their widows and children. The decision of the Court was in general agreement with the claims of the northern Church. Judge Leavitt decided: (1) That the General Conference had no power to divide the Church; and (2) that there was no claim in the action of the General Conference of 1844 to such power. He affirmed (3) that the General Conference was prohibited from applying the produce of the Book Concern except for a specified purpose and in a specified manner; and annual conferences had refused to remove the restriction. He asserted (4) that the Book Concern was a charity for the benefit of the ministers, their widows and children, and that those who withdrew from the Church ceased to be beneficiaries of the charity. He admitted (5) that ministers or members were privileged to withdraw whenever they desired, but he maintained that "in withdrawing they take with them none of the rights of property pertaining to them while in the Church," and the separation of 1845 was considered of this character. His conclusion was that the defendants were not guilty of "breach of trust or any improper use or application of the property or funds in their keeping."⁵⁸

When the New York case was decided in favor of the South, northern papers were found in opposition to the decision; when the northern Church was successful at Cin-

cinnati, southerners were convinced that the result was without reason or justice. Elliott wrote that "the St. Louis Advocate laments that no earthly power 'can rectify the wrongs which have been done to the many poor, suffering, superannuated preachers, widows and orphans, who have by these means been deprived of a great part of their means of support.'" He quoted the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* as saying that "lobby counsel and outdoor influence" had "been busy in producing this result against the clear conviction of both moral equity and legal right." According to Elliott, this paper was "convinced that no good thing could not come out of Ohio and the late trial staggered their faith."⁵⁹

Both cases were appealed to the United States Supreme Court, but the property question was not argued in Washington until April, 1854.⁶⁰ In the meantime, a settlement was arranged by the New York commissioners. In May, 1853, the eastern commissioners, at the instance of Judge M'Lean, held a meeting which agreed on a basis of settlement if the western and southern commissioners consented. Court proceedings were to cease, and the decision of the Court at New York was to be binding upon the Western Book Concern as well as upon that at New York.⁶¹ To this request the western commissioners refused to accede. In this decision they were supported by their counsel, Mr. Ewing, who stated that they had no right to enter into a compromise on the question at issue.⁶²

In spite of the decision of the Cincinnati commissioners, those at New York continued negotiations. In November, 1853, they met with the southern commissioners and arranged a settlement of the property question as far as they were concerned. They agreed to pay \$191,000 in cash, of which the dividends due and unpaid should be a part, and turn over all the debts owed the Book Concern by people residing in southern territory. Further, the printing establishments at Richmond, Charleston and Nashville were to become the property of the Church, South. The unpaid portion of the Book Concern dividends, which had been held back because of the dispute were to be paid as soon as possible.⁶³ That the decision to arbitrate the property question and pay over the funds was not due to any sense of justice on the part of the northern commissioners is clear

from their report to the General Conference of 1856, in which they said: "Your committee beg leave to assure the General Conference, that while this arrangement was affected in full view of the legal decisions already made, and the moral certainty of those destined to follow, they were also prompted by the strictest economy, upon the part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, a very considerable sum being saved to the Book (Concern)." ⁶⁴

Great was the rejoicing of southern leaders over the outcome of the New York suit, especially since they hoped that better relations between the two churches might result. William Smith of Virginia expressed the hope that fraternal relations might be established. To his overture Elliott replied: "The Scriptures say, 'first pure, then peaceable'. We therefore first pray for purity, and then for peace and amity." ⁶⁵ Dr. Wightman, editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate*, also suggested the re-establishment of fraternal relations. But again Elliott refused the offer of friendship and declared that there was "a long list of misdeeds of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that must be amended before there will be cordial amity between the two Churches. And the proceedings of the south in regard to the property question contain a pretty long list of additional wrong acts that will be difficult either to remove, explain, or bear, on the part of the Methodist Episcopal Church, in view of fraternization." ⁶⁶ But in spite of Elliott's ill-temper, Wightman professed to believe that there were many, even in the North, who rejoiced over the settlement. ⁶⁷

After the Cincinnati Court decided in favor of the northern Church, Judge M'Lean, in a letter dated October 29, 1852, advised very "strongly and decidedly" that the Church at the North propose a compromise on the property question. ⁶⁸ This suggestion does not seem to have met with favor on the part of the Cincinnati commissioners. But the latter submitted a proposition to the bishops, in which they suggested the advisability of again asking annual conferences to permit the division of the Church property. The proposal was dropped because not only the bishops, but also the New York commissioners, considered such a proposal useless. ⁶⁹

When the eastern commissioners made their proposal to settle the dispute on the basis of the New York Court's decision, those at Cincinnati refused because they said it

would seem a repudiation of what they considered a just decision in the Cincinnati case and an approval of a wrong decision at New York. Further, they declared that there was no evidence that the Church desired any such action. Resolutions expressing their sentiments were submitted to Judge M'Lean⁷⁰ who declined to forward them to the southern commissioners. The western commissioners then sent their statement directly to the southern commissioners who refused to consider them.⁷¹

That the Cincinnati case would be appealed to the Supreme Court was the general opinion,⁷² and such was the result. But the editor of *Zion's Herald* was not optimistic as to the probable outcome for he expected the decision to be against the North, "knowing how completely the atmosphere at Washington is filled with the miasma of slavery."⁷³ The result justified the fears of the northern faction, for the position of the southern Church was fully sustained.⁷⁴

The decree of the Court was held in abeyance, owing to the tardy decision of the western commissioners to settle the dispute out of court. They offered the southern Church \$70,000 but the offer was promptly declined because the southern representatives believed they were entitled to over \$90,000. The agreement was finally reached that the southern Church should be paid \$80,000 in cash and that the debts owed the Book Concern by southerners, amounting to \$12,926.61, should be turned over to the southern Church for collection. That the northern commissioners considered that they had struck a rare bargain appears from their statement to the General Conference of 1856: "Indeed, when we reflect that the Southern debts were all past due, many of them outlaws, some worthless, and all, while in the hands of the Book Concern, of little or *no* value; and that the South claimed, and could collect (under the decree of the Court) the interest on their portion of the capital since the rendering of the decree, and which was not taken into account in our calculation, although it would raise their proportion about three thousand dollars; and that the extension of credit beyond ordinary business limits and the proffered offer of purchases, with which the Southern propositions were accompanied, were greatly advantageous to the Concern at this crisis, we did not perceive that their proposition materially varied from our own."⁷⁵

A recent writer has said that "few impartial minds will doubt that the decision of the Supreme Court rendered substantial justice."⁷⁶ But the judgment of history is not in accord with the opinions of leaders at the time. Elliott objected because Judge Nelson, who had written the opinion in the New York case, represented the Court in the final decision. But the fact that the Court was unanimously for the South weakens his charge of bias. In view of a later decision which was very generally condemned in the North and especially by Methodists, Elliott's complaint is particularly interesting. "Surely the case before the Supreme Court was of importance enough to have a decision from Judge Taney, or some other judge of the bench, who had not prejudiced the case."⁷⁷ And the western commissioners suggested that the Supreme Court was not to be trusted. "For ourselves, we do not regret that the Supreme Court has decided the case. If it was decided according to the law, it is well for us, for the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church, for the whole country, that the law should be proclaimed by our highest judicial tribunal. If it has been decided otherwise, it behooves us all to know how far the Supreme Court of the United States can be relied upon."⁷⁸

Except for the opposition of a few radical Methodist papers and leaders in the North, it seems entirely probable that the division of the Church funds would have been effected with little or no strife. But the long controversy in the papers of both churches resulted simply in creating hatred instead of restoring and maintaining the cordial relations that should have existed. The result of the legal battle was favorable to the Church, South. But so intense was the excitement that, for over two decades, the northern Church maintained that the property was really theirs.⁷⁹ As one surveys the controversy, he is convinced that the northern Church showed a notable lack of magnanimity, fairness and desire for justice. This hatred made it easy to fan to a flame the passions of the people on the disturbing political questions of the decade before the Civil War, and arouse the feeling of patriotism towards a section rather than the nation as a whole.

1. *Supra*, p. 146, resolution 7.

2. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume XVIII., p. 183, col. 1; June 26, 1844.

3. Sutton, The Methodist Church Property Case, p. 213.
4. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 399.
5. Rock River (Elliott, The Great Secession, p. 401); Erie (Western Christian Advocate, Volume XI., p. 70, col. 5; August 16, 1844); Pittsburg (Pittsburg Christian Advocate, Volume XI., p. 106, col. 6; July, 1846); and Michigan (Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 18, cols. 4-6; November, 1844).
6. Myers, The Disruption of the M. E. Church, pp. 125-6. The statement reads: "We regret the excitement at the South, for the effect it is having in New England, in reference to the resolution that is to come before us on a division of the Church-property. It is understood, of course, that the South have no legal claim to the property. . . . It is a questionable point whether it will be morally proper for the North to sanction, by liberal largesses, a schism which, however desirable, if properly conducted, is evidently to be . . . a battery of unceasing hostility and abuse against ourselves. We regret to state that these circumstances render the fate of the resolution (for dividing the property) exceedingly doubtful in New England. Our best hope for it is that it may be deferred a year, to ascertain the attitude of the South, but even this is doubtful. New England can defeat the measure . . . and she is beginning to feel that self-respect, as well as moral propriety, will compel her to do it."
7. Armstrong, The Old Baltimore Conference, pp. 278, 283.
8. Herrick and Sweet, A History of the North Indiana Conference, p. 8.
9. Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 425.
10. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 404.
11. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume XIX., p. 154, col. 2; May 7, 1845.
12. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 402.
13. Ibid., cols. 402-4.
14. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XI., p. 102, col. 4; October 11, 1844. Cf. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 406-7. "A member of the Northwestern conference is reported to have stated openly in conference that he had no idea of giving the funds to the South, and as one argument he stated that they were extravagant and would waste the money if placed in their hands." (Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 1, col. 6; November 1, 1844).
15. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 1, col. 5; November 1, 1844.
16. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume XIX., p. 142, col. 4; April 16, 1845.
17. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 409.
18. Concerning some of the negative votes, some question was raised.
19. Sutton, The Methodist Church Property Case, pp. 146-7.
20. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XVIII., p. 154, col. 2; September 29, 1847.
21. Pittsburg Christian Advocate, Volume XII., p. 34, col. 6; March 19, 1845.
22. Ibid., Volume XIII., p. 60, cols. 2-4; March 11, 1846.
23. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XIII., p. 13, cols. 3-4; May 8, 1846. Cf. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., No. 29; May 15, 1846.
24. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 13; January 24, 1845.
25. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume XIV., p. 22, cols. 2-3; April 9, 1846.
26. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 1; November 1, 1844.
27. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), p. 22, col. 1; February 10, 1848.
28. Ibid., Volume XIV., p. 22, cols. 1-4; April 9, 1846. Cf. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., No. 27; May 1, 1846.
29. Sutton, The Methodist Church Property Case, p. 103.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 143-5. The following extract is especially interesting:
 "It follows hence, that both by the language of the Discipline and that of the Plan of Separation, the question was to be settled by the aggregate vote of those members of the several annual conferences, who were present in their annual sessions, when the question came up, and *actually voted* upon it. If any refused or failed to vote, with such we have nothing to do—they cannot be regarded as either for or against the measure. They declined the right of suffrage by refusing to act, and the determination of the question rests with those who were present *and voted* in accordance with the law. In the instance of several annual conferences, the vote was contingent, and future events, now to be judged by the commissioners, were to give an *affirmative* or *negative* character to their votes. In the instance of two of these at least (and we believe it to be equally true of four) it is susceptible of the clearest proof, that by their *own official showing*, their votes must, beyond all doubt, be counted in the affirmative, or not at all."
- In 1849, Baltimore and Philadelphia conferences voted "unanimously to suspend the rule." (Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, p. 162). Such action, in 1845, would have avoided years of strife and legal warfare.
31. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 145.
 32. Clark, *Life and Times of Hedding*, pp. 601-2.
 33. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XI., No. 6; December 4, 1846.
 34. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume I., (New Series), p. 146, col. 1.
 35. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XII., No. 3; November 12, 1847.
 36. Pittsburg Christian Advocate, Volume XII., p. 145, col. 6; October 1, 1845.
 37. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XI., No. 33; June 11, 1847. Cf. Ridgeway, *The Life of Bishop Janes*, p. 110.
 38. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), p. 82, col. 1; May 25, 1848.
 39. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 144.
 40. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 146.
 41. *Ibid.*, p. 104.
 42. Journal of General Conference, 1848, p. 54.
 43. *Ibid.*, pp. 95, 141.
 44. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6. Cf. Gorrie, *History of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, pp. 113-14.
 45. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume II (New Series), p. 94, col. 2; June 15, 1848.
 46. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XII., No. 30; May 26, 1848.
 47. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XI., p. 70, col. 3; August 16, 1844.
 48. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XI., No. 52; September 21, 1847.
 49. *Ibid.*, Volume XII., No. 30; May 20, 1848.
 50. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume III (New Series), p. 10, cols. 5-6; January 18, 1849.
 51. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XIII., No. 45; September 7, 1849.
 52. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 151. Cf. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, p. 364.
 53. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 148 ff.
 54. *Ibid.*, p. 367.
 55. Journal of General Conference, 1852, p. 127. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 720-21.
 56. Quoted in Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVI.; January 8, 1852.
 57. *Ibid.*, January 15, 1852.
 58. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 793-4.
 59. *Ibid.*, col. 794.
 60. *Ibid.*, col. 799.

61. Journal of General Conference, 1856, p. 245.
62. Ibid., p. 246.
63. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 733-4.
64. Journal of General Conference, 1856, p. 276. Cf. Ibid., p. 221.
65. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 816.
66. Ibid., cols. 815-16.
67. Ibid., col. 814. His statement is as follows:

"To our northern brethren, we can readily believe that this settlement, which lifts from their consciences and better feelings a very unpleasant burden, is acceptable. It sets them right once more before the community. It quiets a distinctly felt and oft-expressed sense of uneasiness on the part of a large body of the Methodist laity. We had the opinion volunteered to us in New York, not long since, in influential quarters, that no blessing from God, no extensive revivals of religion need be expected, till a fair settlement was made with the south. Some such feeling we suppose to have been general."

The editor of the *Buffalo Christian Advocate* was quoted as saying: "We are glad in our heart, that we are permitted to announce the fact. It will be hailed by the church in general with decided favor." (Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVII., December 15, 1853).
68. Journal of General Conference, 1856, p. 245.
69. Ibid., p. 246.
70. Two of the resolutions follow:

"That while we regret the litigation before the civil courts occasioned by the suits brought by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, and feel disposed to do everything that justice, equity, or a Christian spirit may demand, we do not think we are required to make any proposition for compromise, or that it would be proper for us to do so."

"That while we deeply regret the litigation into which the Methodist Episcopal Church has been forced, we cannot conceive any good reason why the Church we represent and serve, or the cause of religion, should suffer disgrace by our being sued, especially under the circumstances under which the suit was brought, and our appearing as defendants before the Courts of the country." The alternative was arbitration or a decision by the courts.
71. Journal of General Conference, 1856, pp. 246-7.
72. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 794. The illustration given is the statement of Judge Leavitt, at the conclusion of the Cincinnati case. "Although the conclusions to which I have arrived have been satisfactory to myself, I experience the highest gratification from the reflection that if I have misconceived the points arising in the case, and have been led to wrong results, my errors will be corrected by that high tribunal to which the rights of these parties will, without doubt, be submitted."
73. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXV., p. 86, col. 3.
74. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 799.
75. Journal of General Conference, 1856, pp. 249-50, 254-5.
76. Townsend, A New History of Methodism, Volume II., pp. 130-31.
77. Elliott, The Great Secession, col. 800.
78. Journal of General Conference, 1856, pp. 251-3.
79. Myers, The Disruption of the M. E. Church, pp. 171-2.

CHAPTER XV

THE TREND OF THE TIMES.

In the three previous chapters some of the untoward results of the General Conference of 1844 have been considered. It has been shown that the bitterness between the two sections of the Church was accentuated by these controversies. For a generation or more, the discussion of topics connected with the deposition of Bishop Andrew, the adherence of border societies and the division of the Church funds, stirred old passions to fever pitch and widened the breach between the two Methodisms. In the present chapter we shall show the trend of the times on the question of slavery,¹ as it related itself to the two churches.

The attack upon Bishop Andrew in the General Conference of 1844 was rightly considered by southern Methodists as a thrust at the institution of slavery. Georgia ministers asserted that the decision in the case of Andrew would cause a slave insurrection.² The whole attitude of the General Conference on the question of slavery was condemned by the Louisville Convention of 1845, and made the basis of the resolution asking for a separate Church organization.³

Local churches and ministers were in complete sympathy with southern conferences. A North Carolina church considered slavery a civil institution and under the exclusive control of the states and territories where it existed. Since the Bible did not prohibit slavery they thought that the question of slaveholding should be left "to the enlightened judgment and conscience of every man."⁴ Princess Anne Circuit, Virginia, asserted that slavery was "opposed to no law of Methodist discipline, nor to the law of God; neither is it a '*moral evil*,' but is an institution fastened upon us by northern 'traders in blood,' which has been abolished at the north (as far as concerns the negroes) by interest, under the garb of philanthropy." Abolitionism was "an insatiate Moloch, upon whose unholy altars its high priests would sacrifice all that is dear to the south—a 'foul spirit of the pit,' whose mildew

breath has arisen to blast the Church of God.”⁵ Because Dr. Bond was supposed to have become an abolitionist, he was termed “a recreant southern man, and unworthy the confidence of the South any longer.”⁶ At a meeting held in Nashville, July 8, 1844, it was affirmed that it was “the right of every member of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from the bishop to the layman, to hold slaves when the law” permitted.⁷ The Opelousas, Louisiana, church favored expunging from the Discipline “every provision in regard to slavery, except so far as the same may direct the relative duties and obligations of master and slave, and this because we find nothing in the word of God prohibiting slavery.”⁸

The Louisville Convention and the southern General Conferences gave official pronouncements on slavery. By the former it was considered “as strictly a civil institution,” with which the Church had nothing to do except to ameliorate the conditions of slaves and carry to them the blessings of the Gospel message. They contended that, although slavery was everywhere present at the beginning of the Christian era, neither Jesus nor the apostles were against it. It was pointed out that early attempts of the Methodist Church to destroy slavery had ended in failure and that the law of the Church did not consider slavery under all circumstances a sin. Where it was not practicable to free the slaves because of a state law or where the liberated slave could not “enjoy freedom,” emancipation was “not required of any owner of slaves in the Methodist Episcopal Church, from the lowest officer up to the bishop.”⁹

The first southern Methodist General Conference was watched with the keenest interest by the North. May 19, 1846, the Committee on Revision of the Discipline recommended the retention of the rule on Slavery¹⁰ but advised that an explanatory paragraph be added in the language of the General Conference resolutions in 1836 and 1840, especially that dealing with the petition of Westmoreland Circuit.¹¹ These resolutions asserted that annual conferences had no right to interfere with the civil and political relations between masters and slaves; that the subject was put “beyond the power of legislation by the General Government, as well as the control of ecclesiastical bodies;” that the Church should refrain from agitating the subject; and that the mere holding

of slaves in states where the laws did not permit emancipation was no barrier to the election and ordination of ministers.¹² This explanation was also included in the "Pastoral Address". It was insisted that the North had violated the rules of the Methodist Episcopal Church on slavery while the South had adhered strictly to their meaning and former interpretation.¹³

This Conference was severely censured by Elliott, who stressed the fact that no non-slaveholders were elected bishops while Capers and Paine, both of whom became bishops, were large slaveholders. He predicted that their election would mean that ministers and laymen would tend to become owners of slaves. The new bishops would become the boon companions of Calhoun, M'Duffie and Hammond, who would be "intoxicated with joy, in shaking hands with the new episcopacy". Further, he asserted that, while the wording of the rule on slavery had not been changed, yet "the doctrine" was "*entirely expunged or repealed*, to all intents and purposes, and" was "of no more force than if it never was in the Discipline". According to Elliott, the whole section on slavery would have been expunged from the Discipline had it not been for the desire of the southern Church to hold Missouri and Kentucky conferences.¹⁴ That there was a measure of truth in his contention appears from the determination of the latter conference that the section on slavery should not be altered.¹⁵

Southern apologists believed that their Church acted from the highest and purest motives. The editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate* answered the charges made against Bishops Capers and Paine. The slaves of Capers were inherited from his father. Recalling the time when Capers was proposed as a candidate for bishop, he said: "But one thing is evident, he is not more involved in slaveholding than he was in 1836, when James B. Finley and many other northern men voted to promote him to the office of Bishop."¹⁶ The freedom of southern Methodists from those in the North was reason for great rejoicing on the part of Bishop Andrew. "Southern Methodists now feel that their privileges are not held at the mercy of a wild and wayward fanaticism which makes its caprice and its power the rule of action, and which by mere courtesy allows slaveholders to continue members of the Church."¹⁷

Elliott's charge that the Discipline was a dead letter on the question of slavery was unquestionably true in most southern conferences. The *Christian Advocate and Journal* asserted that the Discipline had been suppressed because it was "an incendiary publication." But a southern editor replied that it had not been suppressed because it was incendiary but rather because access to the negroes by missionaries would otherwise be curtailed.¹⁸ Even from Kentucky, the most anti-slavery of all southern states, came advice to nullify the section on slavery. The writer was probably correct when he said there were "many pious Methodists, both North and South, who would not burn" him "as a heretic" if he expressed his belief that the entire section in the Discipline on slavery should be removed.¹⁹

In 1850, the General Conference made a strong effort to remove the section dealing with slavery. But the vote was only 43 to 38 for removal and therefore failed of a constitutional majority.²⁰ While the Church, South, had been unable to remove the section on slavery, it was predicted that the rule would not survive the next quadrennial conference.²¹ Without doubt, the attitude of Bishop Soule contributed towards this gradual change in sentiment. He considered the section "entirely inapplicable" and "inefficient" to accomplish the removal of slavery; as an attempt to interfere with state and national laws; and as "detrimental to the best interests of the colored population of all the States where slavery exists."²²

That the southern Church was really interested in the welfare of slaves is beyond question. The southern press published a book entitled "Duties of Masters to Servants."²³ St. Louis conference declared that they had no sympathy for those "who either openly or clandestinely interfere with the civil relations between master and slave," but they also pledged themselves to ameliorate the condition of slaves and called attention to the great need of religious instruction for the negroes.²⁴ Reports of what was actually accomplished and planned in at least one conference are still more convincing. In January, 1846, there was published a report of South Carolina conference on missions, in which it was revealed that, of the \$14,250 raised for missions, \$11,000 had been appropriated to the work among negroes of the conference.²⁵ A year later, another important document show-

ing the growth of missionary work among slaves and the interest of Methodists in the spiritual welfare of the slave population, had a prominent place in one of the Church publications. While not repudiating the right of southerners to hold slaves, it was a strong statement of the responsibility which South Carolina conference assumed for the dependent race.²⁶

It might reasonably be expected that the northern Methodist Church would become as anti-slavery as the Wesleyan Methodists. Andrew had been deposed, ostensibly because of his connection with slavery, slight though it unquestionably was, and the consequent effect upon the "itinerant system" of the Church. Southern Methodists had been condemned for forming a pro-slavery Church and seeking to destroy every vestige of opposition to their "institution" in the Discipline. Much was made of the fact that the first two bishops elected by southerners were slaveholders. However, though consistency might imply a new and more radical stand on the question, a survey of the attitude of northern conferences, leaders and newspapers is extremely disappointing to uncompromising opponents of slavery.

Baltimore conference's committee on slavery presented a report in which they commented upon the peculiar situation existing between the North and the South. They declared that non-slaveholding was a condition for admission of a candidate into the conference and also a requirement for continuance in the ranks of the travelling ministry. They considered that local preachers in Virginia were protected by provisions of the Discipline, since the laws of that state did "not permit the emancipated slave to live within her bounds and enjoy freedom." The ownership of slaves was not a disqualification for church membership, and slavery itself was not "*necessarily and under all circumstances a sin.*" This statement and three resolutions were tabled and never considered.²⁷ Whether Elliott believed that this report had been accepted, or was giving a general impression of the attitude of the conference does not appear, but that the conference had not changed is evident from his statement that Baltimore conference was anti-slavery and anti-abolition as they had been for sixty years. "It has received no new lessons from abolitionists or pro-slavery men, but continues in its unflinching posture, giving the world to see a *model* of excellency

well worthy the imitation of Kentucky and Missouri." As to the attitude of his section towards this sort of a stand, Elliott says that "the whole northwest are perfectly one with Baltimore, and they will continue one from generation to generation."²⁸

Other border conferences were entirely sympathetic with the position of Baltimore conference. Philadelphia conference was not only opposed to the agitation of the slavery question,²⁹ but elected a slaveholder to membership in the conference by a practically unanimous vote "in order to prevent that part of the Church going with the Church South."³⁰ In 1847 they declared that they were not abolitionists — that while they were "as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery," they knew their "calling too well to interfere with matters not properly belonging to the Christian ministry." They determined to remain, as they had previously been, opposed to slavery and abolitionism. They deprecated the agitation which had divided the Church and called attention to the fact that the rules of the two Methodist churches on slavery were exactly the same. "We cannot, therefore, see how we can be regarded as abolitionists, without the ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church South being considered in the same light . . . We would also say, that there are members of this conference who have from time to time given you the most conclusive evidence, by their public acts and writings, that they are far from being abolitionists, and who with confidence and love abide in the conference of their early choice."³¹ Garrison wrote that all candidates for orders in this conference who did not declare that they were not abolitionists were rejected.³² That he was a prejudiced witness cannot be denied, but that he spoke the truth in this instance is shown from the Pastoral Address of the conference to the people of their territory. They refuted the charge that they were abolitionists and pointed to their record of the preceding sixty years to protect them against such gross injustice. They also affirmed that they had for several years put to every candidate for admission into the conference the question, "*Are you an abolitionist?*" Unless he replied in the negative he was not received.³¹

That Ohio conference was opposed to abolitionists is evident from the fact that the *Western Christian Advocate* was so strongly against them.³³ Further to the westward,

Illinois conference was also anti-abolition in its sentiments. Akers, a member of this body, declared that he was "thoroughly satisfied that our Church should continue as heretofore, to oppose with equal discountenance the offensiveness both of abolitionism and pro-slaveryism."³⁴ That his conference would have supported him seems assured from the fact that they approved the work of the Colonization Society in 1847,³⁵ and from the strenuous opposition of Cartwright to abolition doctrines.³⁶

The reactionary tendency in the northern Church is more clearly seen in the action of conferences further north. During the period under consideration, neither Troy nor Genesee conference "Minutes" show any resolution against slavery.³⁷ In 1844 and 1845 Maine conference condemned slavery and the "secession" of southern conferences.³⁸ But in 1846 they asserted that while an intelligent slaveholder could not be a Christian, they were opposed to the ultraism of both the North and the South.³⁹ Providence conference in 1845 resolved: "That we have entire confidence in the Anti-Slavery character of our brethren of the Baltimore Conference; that we greatly rejoice that they stand, where they have ever stood, upon true Methodist ground; . . . and that we pledge ourselves to abide by them, in their support of Methodism, as transmitted to us by 'the Fathers'."⁴⁰

New Hampshire conference had formerly been one of the most radical in opposition to slavery. In 1845 they approved the action of the General Conference of 1844 on slavery and suggested that, if they had made a mistake, "it was rather by being too lenient than otherwise." They declared that the decision of the Louisville Convention encouraged them to believe that the Methodist Episcopal Church would soon be freed from all connection with slavery. To non-slaveholders of the South they said: "We hope all our brethren of the south who are not involved in the sin of slaveholding will still adhere to the M. E. Church and her institutions, and thereby be co-workers with us in spreading scriptural holiness over the southern as well as these northern lands."⁴¹ In 1846, the conference took the usual stand against slavery in the abstract, but also adopted the following equivocal resolution: "Resolved, That in using the terms 'abolition' and 'abolitionism', we do not mean to imply the least sympathy with the falsely so-called abolition-

ism of the 'Garrisonian party', nor do we mean a system of *persecution* of slaveholders; nor do we imply that the mere *legal* relation of master and slave in all cases, must be sinful; but we do mean by these terms, as in the language of our excellent Discipline, that slavery is a 'great evil', and that it consequently ought to be *abolished*."⁴² The next year they refused to fellowship any engaged in buying or selling slaves, or those "who, for their own profit, hold slaves and attempt to justify such practice on Christian principles."⁴³ In 1848, these ministers threatened political interference, if necessary, to prevent the further extension of slavery.⁴⁴

Only Vermont and New England conferences showed any signs of the former vigor. The first condemned slavery and opposed its further introduction into free territory. They also affirmed that "the slaves of this nation, by virtue of their *humanity*, are men, women, and children; and, therefore, *they* are not, never were, and never can be the property of other human beings."⁴⁵ New England conference approved the action of their delegates in the General Conference of 1844; demanded the "utter extirpation" of slavery from the Church; and said they would use their entire power to "restore our fellow men to the exercise and enjoyment of civil and religious liberty."⁴⁶ They opposed any plans to conciliate slaveholders and declared that, if a man were found to be possessed of slaves, the burden of proof should be placed on him to show that he was compelled to hold slaves, or else be charged with immorality.⁴⁷ In 1847, they affirmed that emancipation was practicable in any state in the Union, and they therefore refused to "recognize or fellowship as a Christian any person who is guilty of this sin; nor can we acknowledge as a sister church any organization that clearly permits or sanctions this sin in its members."⁴⁸

For some time after the General Conference of 1844 abolition lecturers had been at work in northern Ohio against the conservatism of several churches. Particularly did they condemn Erie conference for their attitude towards slavery. No one could successfully defend the conference and as a result many societies were distracted and members everywhere were threatening to leave the Church. Face to face with such a catastrophe, ministers and people of the Western Reserve "felt the absolute necessity of changing the position

of the conference on that subject." Petitions and memorials were drafted and adopted by many groups and forwarded to the conference.⁴⁹

The report of the conference Committee on Slavery was a compromise. They said the General Rule on Slavery forbade trafficking in slaves, but they nevertheless asked for an additional statement explaining its true meaning. They interpreted the rule to apply to any state, territory or district, where the laws permitted emancipation and allowed the liberated slave to enjoy his freedom. They disclaimed all fellowship with the ultra-radical party in the North. After strong speeches for and against it by J. J. Steadman and Calvin Kingsley, respectively, the report seems to have been adopted, the vote on the second resolution providing for a change of the rule on slavery being 65 to 26.⁴⁹

The Erie conference resolution asking for a change of the General Rule on Slavery was presented to the other conferences for their approval. The results indicate conclusively that the Methodist Episcopal Church had no intention of becoming radical on this subject. Only the New England conference approved the proposals.⁵⁰ Oneida,⁵¹ Ohio,⁵² North Indiana,⁵³ and Illinois⁵⁴ conferences voted against it. Baltimore conference of 1846 voted unanimously against the resolution.⁵⁵ They decided to continue in the northern Church but at the same time issued an ultimatum which read: "*Resolved, 2. That this conference disclaim having any fellowship with abolitionism. On the contrary while it is determined to maintain its well known and established position, by keeping the travelling preachers composing its own body free from slavery, it is also determined not to hold connection with any ecclesiastical body that shall make non-slaveholding a condition of membership in the Church, but to stand by and maintain the Discipline as it is.*"⁵⁶ Providence conference recalled with gratitude the accomplishment of Baltimore conference in 1844,⁵⁷ and pledged themselves to continue in their former course which was called "the same conservative and true anti-slavery ground by which this Conference has already become distinguished."⁵⁸

E. O. Haven⁵⁹ asserted that "the first two General Conferences after the division - those of 1848 and 1852 - gave

less attention to slavery than any other in the history of American Methodism."⁶⁰ While this is unquestionably an exaggeration, yet the General Conference of 1848 did nothing which had for its purpose the destruction of slavery within the Church. No change was made in the General Rule on that subject. The delegates actually took steps to lessen the expenditures in Liberia by putting the burden upon the negroes themselves.⁶¹ Little interest was taken in the negroes in this country. When a petition from the colored members in Baltimore was presented, asking that ministers of their own race be permitted to have charge over all negro Methodists of the Church, and that "an annual conference of coloured preachers be organized,"⁶² the Conference declared that it was inexpedient to organize such a conference at that time. They asserted that the Discipline gave bishops the right to "employ coloured preachers to travel and preach, where their services are judged necessary" if they had been "recommended by a quarterly conference."⁶³

The conservatism and apathy discovered in most northern conferences on the question of slavery was just as widespread in the columns of Methodist papers. While *Zion's Herald* condemned the sale of a slave woman in Washington, D. C.,⁶⁴ yet the position of Baltimore conference in 1846 was approved by this paper and also by the *Christian Advocate and Journal*.⁶⁵ The attitude of the *Pittsburg Christian Advocate* may be inferred from its refusal to publish resolutions adopted by some anti-slavery Methodists of Franklin, Ohio. These abolitionists condemned the slave trade from Africa and frankly stated their conviction that the sin of slavery was largely to be laid at the door of the Church. Northerners who refused to speak against slavery were called "soul-murderers." They even opposed northerners having fellowship with slaveholders.⁶⁶ The Discipline of the Church was considered to be against slavery and they therefore asserted that they would refuse to support a minister who was pro-slavery or who did not speak out boldly against slavery.⁶⁷

As has already been indicated, the *Western Christian Advocate* approved the action of Baltimore conference and declared that the northwest was one with the border conference.

While the editor could find time and space for articles of a nature pleasing to slaveholding conferences, yet his hand was against abolitionists at all times. In an article entitled "Abolitionism and the Methodist Episcopal Church," he expressed his unalterable opposition to the doctrines of radicals because they agitated the Church and State and because they said that slavery was always sinful. He asserted that "the Methodist Episcopal Church had adopted no such doctrine, and she never will or can adopt it."⁶⁸ To show that the Methodist Episcopal Church was not abolitionist, Elliott noted the fact that they had refused to follow Garrison, Scott and other abolitionists. Again the practice of the Church for the preceding sixty years indicated the opposition of Methodists to the radical demands. He maintained that the Church would continue this opposition to abolitionists in the future. He protested that abolitionists had not scared the North but that that section had determined to adhere to the anti-slavery principles held by Methodism before abolitionism was known.⁶⁸ Elliot later declared his belief that the work of abolitionists had retarded the progress of freedom fifty years.⁶⁹

Further indication that Elliott was conservative is to be found in his willingness to print accounts of Colonization Society meetings,⁷⁰ and also in his advice that radical methods to remove slavery should not be countenanced.⁷¹ And a correspondent, under the pen name "Illinois," advised that southerners be permitted to "attend to their own business in their own way;" that the free states be "'diligent in business, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord,'" and that "the friends of the colored man, both in the slave and free states, unite together, in one great effort, to release the negroes from *spiritual bondage*." ⁷²

A survey of the material presented shows conclusively that neither the South nor the North had changed on the question of slavery as a result of the General Conference of 1844 and the consequent division of the Church. The South had always been decidedly conservative or pro-slavery. Slavery was not, under all circumstances, considered a sin. The strife caused by the division of the Church had resulted in many pro-slavery expressions by southerners but their attitude was not changed but only intensified by that event. Elliott and other northerners had at-

tempted to fasten upon the South the reproach of supporting a pro-slavery Church. That they held slaves was not denied by southerners, but many of them maintained that they were involuntary slaveholders and that the laws of the states in which they resided rendered emancipation impossible. Further, it was exceedingly difficult for northerners to prove from the Scriptures that slavery was wrong, and from the history of the Methodist Church that the precedents were not on the side of the South.⁷³

The southern Church had at least the virtue of consistency; the Methodist Episcopal Church could scarcely claim that much. For, while claiming to be anti-slavery, northerners retained slaveholders in the membership of the Church, and permitted them to hold offices in the local churches and preach in their pulpits.⁷⁴ Garrison declared that, as a result, southerners had only contempt for the Church that was attempting "so to serve God as not to offend the devil."⁷⁴ The editor of the *True Wesleyan* pointed out that the rules of the two churches were exactly the same, and that the General Conference of 1848 had done nothing against slavery. On the contrary, they had voted to extend their jurisdiction over Virginia, Maryland, Kentucky, Missouri and Arkansas so that there were eight slaveholding conferences in the northern Church.⁷⁵ It may be claimed that both of these writers were antagonistic to the Methodist Episcopal Church. That is true, but admissions of northern conferences and leaders themselves prove the truth of their statements.

Elliott made the charge that the Church, South, would have been still more pro-slavery if it had not been that leaders feared losing border conferences to the northern Church.⁷⁶ But that the northern Church also feared losing this border territory is equally true. We have seen that conservatives in Erie conference acted only when radicals threatened to secede.⁷⁷ The threat of Baltimore conference to leave the Church if anything radical were done caused much anxiety and undoubtedly was responsible for the willingness of almost every northern conference to compromise sufficiently to hold border conferences. Attacked from front and rear, the conservatives continued to flirt with both groups of radicals, with the odds in favor of the pro-slavery border.

1. In this chapter, the period covered is that from 1844 to 1850.
2. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 115-18.
3. *History of the Organization of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, p. 179.
4. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 70, col. 4; August 16, 1844. Many of these resolutions are printed in the papers of both churches.
5. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 70, col. 3; August 16, 1844.
6. *The Liberator*, Volume XIV., p. 157, col. 1; October 4, 1844. Of the slaves the preacher-author of the above statement says: "They would be hung and shot down in the streets for their roguery, their insolence and their meanness if they had no masters to make them work, to provide them temporal and spiritual blessings."
7. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XV., p. 2, col. 6; April 12, 1848.
8. *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 153, col. 5; October 16, 1844.
9. Sutton, *The Methodist Church Property Case*, pp. 125 ff.
10. The rule forbade: "*Th buying and selling of men, women, and children, with an intention to enslave them.*" (*The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South*, 1846, p. 24).
11. This action was rescinded by the northern General Conference of 1848.
12. *Journal of the General Conference of the M. E. Church, South*, 1846, pp. 74-5.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 110-12.
14. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 30, cols. 6-7; June 5, 1846. Cf. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 558-9.
15. *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., No. 48; September 26, 1845.
16. *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 177, cols. 3-4; June 24, 1846.
17. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., p. 14, col. 3; May 8, 1846.
18. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume II (New Series), p. 54, cols. 2-3; April 6, 1848.
19. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XIV., No. 11; January 11, 1850. The article is by B. T. Crouch.
20. *Southern Christian Advocate*, Volume XIV., p. 2, col. 4; June 7, 1850.
21. *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, Volume XIV., No. 23; April 5, 1850.
22. *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XVI., p. 309, cols. 1-2; September 25, 1850.
23. *Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate*, Volume XV., No. 39; October 9, 1851.
24. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., No. 1; November 3, 1848.
25. *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., No. 11; January 9, 1846.
26. *Quarterly Review*, Volume I (1847), pp. 319-38.
27. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, pp. 270-80. Cf. *Pittsburg Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 43, col. 1; April 2, 1845.
28. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 2, col. 3; April 18, 1845.
29. *Southwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., No. 26; April 24, 1846.
30. *The Liberator*, Volume XVI., p. 98, col. 3; June 19, 1846.
31. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XIV., p. 6, col. 5; April 23, 1847. J. P. Durbin, who was one of the most ardent defenders of the northern position in 1844, was chairman of the committee.
32. *The Liberator*, Volume XVII., p. 133, col. 1; August 20, 1847.
33. We shall consider the attitude of this paper when we take up the relation of the press to slavery in the Church.

34. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 42, col. 5; June 27, 1845.
35. *Ibid.*, Volume XIV., p. 106, col. 6; October 15, 1847.
36. Cartwright, *Autobiography*, *passim*.
37. See the "Minutes" of these conferences for the years indicated.
38. For the record of 1844 see *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 90, col. 4; September 20, 1844. For that of 1845, see Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1845, pp. 13-14.
39. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1846, pp. 6-7.
40. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XVI., p. 112, col. 2; July 9, 1845.
41. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1845, p. 13.
42. *Ibid.*, 1846, p. 15.
43. *Ibid.*, 1847, p. 12.
44. *Ibid.*, 1848, pp. 14-15.
45. Minutes of the Vermont Conference, 1848, pp. 21-2. Lee, commenting on these resolutions, said: "These Vermont Methodist preachers tell their Virginia Brethren that they are guilty of crimes that must be 'regarded as an enormity for which perdition itself has scarcely an adequate state of punishment! ! !'" *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume II (New Series), p. 126, col. 5; August 10, 1848). The Vermont resolutions do not indicate that there is any justice in Lee's statement.
46. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1845, pp. 12-13.
47. *Ibid.*, 1846, p. 13.
48. *Ibid.*, 1847, pp. 20-21.
49. Gregg, *The History of Methodism in Erie Conference*, Volume II., pp. 277-82.
50. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., No. 32; June 4, 1847.
51. *Ibid.*, No. 43; August 20, 1847.
52. *Ibid.*, Volume X., No. 49; October 2, 1846.
53. Herrick and Sweet, *A History of the North Indiana Conference*, p. 17. The vote was 60 to 2.
54. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., No. 3; November 12, 1847. The vote was 82 to 2.
55. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, p. 285.
56. *Ibid.*, p. 283. Cf. *The Liberator*, Volume XVI., p. 81, col. 4; May 22, 1846. Garrison declared that this resolution "might have been appropriately drawn up by Hope H. Statler, the great negro-trading Methodist of Baltimore."
57. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XII., p. 11, col. 1; May 1 1846.
58. *The Liberator*, Volume XVII., p. 133, col. 1; August 20 1847.
59. Haven was afterwards a bishop of the northern Church.
60. Stratton (editor), *Autobiography of Bishop Haven*, p. 124.
61. *Journal of General Conference*, 1848, p. 131.
62. *Ibid.*, p. 42.
63. *Ibid.*, p. 130.
64. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XVIII., p. 124, col. 2;
65. *The Liberator*, Volume XVI., p. 81, col. 4; May 22, 1846. August 4, 1847.
66. In 1848 it was reported that Bishops Andrew and Morris had taken the communion together at St. Louis. (*Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XIII., No. 2; November 10, 1848.)
67. *The Liberator*, Volume XVI., p. 117; July 17, 1846. 4, 1844.
68. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XI., p. 98, cols. 4-5; October, -4, 1844.
69. *Ibid.*, p. 102, col. 3; October 11, 1844.
70. *Ibid.*, Volume XII., p. 41, col. 4; June 27, 1845.
71. *Ibid.*, Volume XIII., p. 14, col. 5; May 8, 1846.
72. *Ibid.*, Volume XIV., p. 50, col. 6; July 9, 1847.
73. The necessity of finding some other basis for the elimination of social wrongs was one of the important steps in the more recent interpretation of the New Testament.
74. *The Liberator*, Volume XVI., p. 135, col. 1; August 21, 1846. The document is taken from the *Southern Christian Advocate* and reads:

"And now we wish the Methodist Episcopal Church of the United States *North*, joy in being as fully pro-slavery—so far as any and every vital principle is concerned—as the M. E. Church South, is, has been, or ever will be. That ecclesiastical body is formally, truly, undeniably, irrevocably, connected with slavery. Slaveholders lead her classes, slaveholders kneel at her communion tables, slaveholders fill her board of trustees; *slaveholders occupy her very pulpits*. Let New England and Ohio stand aghast, and let the daughters of eastern and western abolitionism gird themselves with sackcloth. Slaveholders occupy her pulpits, we repeat; for although the *travelling* preachers of the Baltimore Conference are not allowed to hold this sort of property, any of the Maryland or Virginia *local preachers* may, that choose so to do; and many of them are slaveholders. A *fine denouement*, truly, is this whole tragedy of the General Conference of 1844. The M. E. Church has lost sixteen of her fairest provinces, and *kept slavery* sticking to her skirts after all. Her enemies within and without will say that she endorses the doctrine that human beings may be regarded as property—held as chattels—and what answer can she give? She sees no moral guilt in the relation of master and slave, *per se*. Her official organs must again be muzzled. Expediency must strangle conscience, or abolitionists will leave the foul communion in thousands. The sliding scale of morality *must* be adopted again, and that course of action be regarded as virtuous and praiseworthy in a layman which would send a bishop to perdition. In short, the Baltimore Conference has conferred a better boon upon the Southern Church by going North, than if she had brought to our communion twice the amount of her present numbers, and ten times the amount of her talent. She keeps slavery in the mother Church, and makes every apology for northern Methodism, a champion of northern rights and principles."

75. The Liberator, Volume XVIII., p. 154, cols. 3-4; September 29, 1848.

76. Supra, p. 190.

77. Supra, pp. 195-6.

CHAPTER XVI

THE ENTERING WEDGE

The six years following the General Conference of 1844 had brought no perceptible change in the attitude of the Methodist Episcopal Church towards slavery. But the six years after 1850 were so filled with political discussions on this subject that the Church could not escape controversy. Slowly and with the greatest reluctance northern ministers enacted legislation which was an advance over any previous strictures against slavery.

In 1850 Vermont conference declared that "for those who *voluntarily* sustain, extend, and perpetuate slavery," they had no fellowship. They enthusiastically endorsed the anti-slavery sentiment of *Zion's Herald* and commended the editor for his advocacy of abolition principles.¹ Two years later, they showed their disgust for certain people in the North when they stated that for "the (so-called) *anti-slavery* which has long shown itself capable of talking against slavery, and acting in its favor, and for its perpetuity and extension, we have no fellowship."²

Maine conference adopted strong resolutions against slavery in 1850,³ and two years later were frank enough to admit that slavery was protected by the Nation and "tolerated by ecclesiastical usage" and that "men occupying the most important positions in the Church, are actually engaged in defending and sustaining this monstrous system." They asserted that they would not submit to the demands of the slave power, but on the contrary would seek "by all wise and honorable means, the speedy emancipation of the enslaved millions of our own and other lands, and especially" would they endeavor "to remove the shame and reproach of Slavery from the Church of Christ."⁴

There was some sentiment for a change of the General Rule on Slavery. New England conference sought to exclude all voluntary slaveholders from the Church.⁵ Erie conference passed similar resolutions, but they also advocated providing

funds with which to buy the slaves and remove them to free states. In case the slaves could not be freed without injury to themselves, masters were to be urged to teach them to read the Bible and permit them to attend church.⁶ New Hampshire conference was more severe. After admitting that there were "slaveholders who are members of the Methodist Episcopal Church," and expressing concern lest the slave power should be strengthened in the Church, they asked for a change in the General Rule on Slavery so that it would forbid: "Buying or selling men, women, or children with an intention to enslave them or holding and treating them as property."⁷

Baltimore and Philadelphia conferences gave their vote against any change whatever in the Discipline on the subject of slavery.⁸ That these border conferences should take such action is not surprising, but that other conferences should prove so utterly indifferent seems strange indeed. Six conferences took no action at all, either to show their disapproval of slavery in the abstract, or to secure a change of the rule.⁹ The indifference of these conferences was equalled only by the lack of anti-slavery material in the official papers of the period. The *Western Christian Advocate* was the most radical. In its columns were found an appeal of colonizationists of Indiana for the purpose of raising \$2000;¹⁰ and an announcement of a three day anti-slavery convention to be held in Cincinnati.¹¹

With such lethargy existing throughout most of the Church, it was futile to expect the General Conference of 1852 to take any radical action against slavery. There was no lack of memorials, papers and speeches against slavery in the Church and in favor of a change of the Rule on Slavery.¹² Calvin Kingsley seems to have been one of the most active anti-slavery advocates but he was unable to cope with the "strong conservative and semi-proslavery current." His declaration that he would yet be heard was prophetic, but it was to be eight years before any change was made in the Chapter on Slavery.¹³ Petitions and papers were simply referred to the "Committee on Revisals" and no action was ever taken.

It was at this Conference that certain districts of Pittsburg conference, lying within the bounds of Virginia, petitioned that they be joined to Western Virginia conference. The

motives back of this memorial were probably indicated by the Wheeling (Virginia) *Gazette*, which declared that such a disposition of these districts would strengthen Western Virginia conference; unite these districts with a conference with which they were in complete sympathy; make it possible to avoid the embarrassment of having an abolitionist sent as a preacher to Virginians; free a preacher from the North from inevitable difficulties arising from his attempts to instruct the slaves; and finally, join people of similar religious practices through trade on the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad.¹⁴

Following the General Conference of 1852 the annual conferences showed a more radical tendency. As usual, New England conferences led the way. Maine conference of 1855 admitted that slavery existed in State and Church, and that the latter "must lead in this great reformatory movement, as she is to an alarming extent responsible for the existence of the evil."¹⁵ They affirmed their belief that the Discipline, in spirit, was opposed to the system of slavery; and they also voted against the formation of new conferences in slave states unless it was understood that slaveholders should be excluded from the Church.¹⁵ Similar resolutions were adopted by New Hampshire and Vermont conferences.¹⁶

New England conference was also opposed to compromise with the slave power in Church and Nation. It was in 1854 that they called to account leaders of both state and Church, and declared that they discovered "much in the conduct of leading men, both in the Church and State, which should awaken alarm and prompt us to the most decided action." They especially condemned "any disposition to make converts to our denomination, or to recover territory from the M. E. Church, South, by softening the language of pure Methodism on the subject, or by concealing its proper meaning under false interpretations."¹⁷ So strong was this statement that the *Christian Advocate and Journal* refused to print the resolutions, on the ground that they were a reflection on the action of the General Conference of 1848.¹⁸

The resolutions of conferences further west indicate an increasing opposition to slavery. Black River conference condemned the General Conference of 1852 when they said they had "witnessed with surprise, and deep regret, the masterly inactivity of our late General Conference on this subject."¹⁹ Three years later, they approved the opposition

of Maine conference to the creation of any more conferences in slave states until there was a radical change in the attitude of the Church towards slavery.²⁰ Oneida conference, besides opposing slavery, approved the movement to have the United States government recognize the independence of Liberia.²¹

Conferences of the "Old Northwest" were less radical. Cincinnati conference condemned, "after a long and spirited debate," slaveholding for mercenary purposes and declared in favor of religious instruction for the slaves.²² North Ohio conference desired to exclude from the Church all those who held "slaves for the sake of gain."²³ Wisconsin conference asked for a modification of the rule of the Church so that slaveholders would not be eligible to membership in the Church, "except in those instances in which, owing to the stringency of the slave laws, it may be found necessary to permit the legal relation to exist for the protection and support of the slave."²⁴ The following year, 1853, they sought to interpret the rule on slavery so that "all traffic in human beings by members of the Methodist Episcopal Church"²⁵ would be prohibited. In all these resolutions the involuntary slaveholder and the incompetent slave were carefully protected.

A few conferences in this section showed a tendency towards radicalism. In 1853, North Indiana conference declared that those who held slaves for gain were sinners before God, and that no involuntary slaveholder should be admitted into the Church.²⁶ Two years later, they asked the General Conference to determine the date when all slaves belonging to Methodists should be declared free.²⁷ Northwest Indiana conference added their condemnation of slavery as it existed in the Church,²⁸ while Rock River conference asked that the further extension or continuance of slavery in the Methodist Church be prohibited.²⁹

With the approach of the General Conference of 1856, ministers attempted to formulate changes which they desired in the rule on slavery. The changes proposed may be divided into two classes—conservative and radical. Four conferences adopted resolutions providing for a rule which would still have permitted slavery to continue in the Church.³⁰ North Ohio conference's resolution, asking that the rule forbid "The buying or selling of any human being, with an intention

to enslave such person; or holding any person in slavery, where emancipation can be effected without injury to the slave,"³¹ is typical of all. Only Wisconsin conference stood for a rule which would absolutely exclude all slaveholders from the Church.³²

The response of the conferences to these proposals indicates very clearly the real sentiments and the breadth of view of northern ministers. By an almost unanimous vote East Maine conference approved both the Erie and North Ohio resolutions.³³ Three conferences concurred in the resolution of Troy conference.³⁴ On the other hand, the radical Wisconsin proposal was approved by four conferences,³⁵ which indicated a decidedly more aggressive spirit than had formerly obtained.

But the opposition to these resolutions was such that it was impossible to secure action. Thus, while Southeastern Indiana conference declared that non-slaveholding should be a test of membership in the Church and pledged their delegates to the General Conference to work for such a change, they non-concurred in the resolutions of northern conferences.³⁶ Ohio conference protested that they were "as much as ever" opposed to slavery; and favored legislation to secure the rights of matrimony to slaves of Methodists, and to forbid Methodist members engaging in the domestic slave trade; but they defeated the Wisconsin resolution unanimously and the Erie and North Ohio proposals by substantial majorities.³⁷ Both the Wisconsin and North Ohio resolutions were rejected, 28 to 2, by California conference.³⁸

Baltimore conference was unanimously opposed to the Troy resolutions.³⁹ The position of the conference was declared to be the same as in 1846 and the threat of secession issued at that time was republished in 1855.⁴⁰ These ministers watched with the keenest interest and the greatest anxiety the action of western conferences. One of them wrote: "We sincerely desire that moderation shall prevail in the next General Conference, for, if extreme measures are adopted, a ruinous excitement and dismemberment must ensue."⁴¹

Likewise, other border conferences were opposed to any change of the rule on slavery. Philadelphia conference unanimously non-concurred in the Wisconsin plan,⁴² and

reprinted their statement of 1847 in which they said they could not rightly be accused of being abolitionists any more than members of the southern Methodist Church.⁴³ Western Virginia conference refused to approve any of the resolutions asking for a change of the rule on slavery.⁴⁴ Southern Illinois conference explained their non-concurrence by stating: "In existing circumstances, we apprehend that any such changes in our general rules as are recommended in the afore-mentioned documents (the resolutions of Troy, Wisconsin and other conferences) would operate injuriously on our brethren residing in slave territory, the larger portion of whom never had, and from conscientious motives never will, have any connection with Slavery."⁴⁵

Not only were these "border conferences" opposed to any change in the rule on slavery, but also other conferences not so closely associated with the South. When Illinois conference voted in favor of the rule as it then was, they were vigorously denounced by Akers and Stone, two members of that body.⁴⁶ And New York conference declared that the Discipline "maintains substantially the right ground in reference to this great evil, that we are satisfied with it . . . as it is, and that no change in this respect is desirable."⁴⁷

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With sentiment of the conferences divided it was natural that a variety of opinions should be found in the official and semi-official publications of the northern Church. In 1852, Bishop Janes was reported to have invited a distinguished slaveholder into the pulpit. So friendly was the treatment of southern preachers by northern ministers that southerners related with pleasure the accounts of the excellent reception tendered them in the North.⁴⁸ Bishop Scott wrote a two-column article in favor of colonization which depicted the fine climate and the excellent state of affairs in Liberia.⁴⁹ Even Dr. Elliott, who had so bitterly condemned the southern Methodist Church, declared that it was impossible to exclude all slaveholders from the Church. He also affirmed that "those amendments that have been proposed, from the suggestions of the recent abolition school, have little in them calculated to benefit the slaves; while most of them would prove ruinous."⁵⁰

One of the most constructive methods of securing a future reform is to educate the youth of today. But, before

the General Conference of 1856, the *Sunday School Journal* of New York contained no teachings against slavery. Speaking of the general lack of anti-slavery teaching in the churches, Theodore Parker declared in 1854 that there were only a very few "true men" among the twenty-eight thousand Protestant ministers in the United States. Concerning the Methodist Church he asserted that there was not a single "Anti-Slavery Sunday-school" in the denomination. In all the books and pamphlets there was "not a line showing that it is wicked to buy and sell a man, for whom, according to the Methodist Episcopal Church, Christ died."⁵¹

But while this condition undoubtedly obtained in the Sunday School publications, at least two papers were unremitting in their demands for a more anti-slavery position on the part of the northern Church. The *Northwestern Christian Advocate* showed that slaveholding existed among northern ministers of slaveholding conferences as well as in the southern Methodist Church.⁵² Slavery had been too tenderly treated by the Church,⁵³ and the editor called for drastic action on the subject.⁵⁴ And *Zion's Herald* under the editorship of Dr. Wise, contended earnestly for a more radical stand by the northern Church.

The position of these two abolition editors is more clearly seen in their summaries of the probable action of the General Conference of 1856 on the question of slavery. Dr. Wise said that, while the eighteen or more conferences which asked for a stronger rule on slavery were not agreed on what should be done, yet they did agree that "something ought to be done, and that *something* MUST be done at the next General Conference." He was sure that, when the memorials of these bodies were presented to the General Conference, they would "lead to something more than talk," and that changes would be made that would "convince the world that the Methodist Episcopal Church" was "earnestly seeking the extirpation of slavery from her communion."⁵⁵

Dr. Watson, editor of the *Northwestern*, was also hopeful of the outcome at the General Conference. He said that there were four conferences in favor of the rule as it stood;⁵⁶ two for "a change without an improvement";⁵⁷ seven for a new rule;⁵⁸ while fifteen preferred only some slight change in the chapter on slavery.⁵⁹ Speaking of the situation in August, 1855, he said: "Of the ninety delegates to the next

General Conference already elected, only twenty-four were in the last General Conference, and a large majority—if not three-fourths — of those re-elected, are known to be *progressive, anti-slavery men*. Brethren of the Northwest, what think you of the prospect? Shall voluntary slaveholding be longer tolerated in the M. E. Church? Let us be firm. 'Doughfaceism' may defeat us, the devil cannot."⁶⁰

But Watson did not produce all the facts in the case, for Philadelphia and Baltimore conferences were not included in his calculations. Further, the attitude of Missouri, Kentucky, Arkansas, Southern Illinois, Southeastern Indiana and California conferences was not encouraging. He also omitted to say that many conferences refused to accept the recommendations of other conferences so that there was not a three-fourths majority of all the ministers voting in favor of any particular change. That there was no reason for the excessive optimism of Watson appears from the action of New England conference in April, 1856. It is true that they condemned slavery and favored excluding all slaveholders from the Church. They even censured the Tract Committee for removing all anti-slavery tracts from their list of publications. But Elliott wrote of the delegates selected by this conference: "Three of these delegates are decidedly conservative, and opposed to the ultra-abolition school, which, up to this time, has afflicted the New England churches, and has greatly impeded both the cause of religion and the cause of human liberty; and we have no hesitancy in declaring as our settled judgment, that the day of this extravagance is nearly over. Both liberty and religion will be the gainers; especially will the "Churches have rest," and will be more particularly engaged in promoting the salvation of men."⁶¹

It was Matlack, editor of the *True Wesleyan*, who estimated most accurately the sentiment of the northern Church. In his opinion, the few anti-slavery men would make a vain attempt to destroy slavery. The debate would last several days and the abolition program would be defeated by a few votes. Then, to keep the abolitionists from leaving the Church, conservatives would present a meaningless resolution against slavery which would accomplish nothing. This would be accepted. "And the North, making a virtue of necessity, will go home rejoicing in the fact that for the first, in more

than 50 years some specific action has been taken adverse to slavery." Wise believed that Matlack was mistaken and said he was convinced that the General Conference would take some decisive action. Watson agreed. "We are very slow to believe that the next General Conference will evince before the world, that doughfaced truculency, which the present congress in its incipency is certainly doing."⁶²

The General Conference convened in Indianapolis. In the "Address" of the bishops, the rule on slavery was explained to mean that slaves could not be bought or sold; that officials and ministers were forbidden to hold slaves where the state laws permitted emancipation; and that slavery was "a great evil".⁶³ In view of the fact that none of the proposed changes in the rule had received the constitutional three-fourths vote of the ministers, the bishops doubted whether "any measure equivalent to a change in the General Rules" could "be constitutionally adopted without the concurrence of the Annual Conferences."⁶⁴ Janes, who read the address, says that it was "very severely criticised by the ultra party and strongly denounced."⁶⁵

The action of the Conference on the work among the colored people indicates the attitude of the Church towards the negroes. Methodists were urged to support a special institution in Ohio which should educate negroes for missionary work in Africa.⁶⁶ The Committee on Colored Members⁶⁷ recommended a change in the section of the Discipline dealing with negroes in the Church. As it stood after 1856 the Discipline permitted negro preachers and members all the rights of white ministers and members — "where the usages of the country" did "not forbid it." The presiding elder was given permission to hold quarterly conferences for negroes whenever he considered it "expedient." Further, bishops and presiding elders were authorized to "employ colored preachers to travel and preach" whenever it was considered "necessary". No negro could be used for this purpose without the recommendation of a quarterly conference. Finally, bishops were permitted to hold a conference for colored local preachers for the purpose of considering the work among negroes. But the presiding elder of the district in which the conference was held must be present and the conference itself must be authorized by an annual

conference and considered by the bishops to be "practicable and expedient."⁶⁸

The changing of the Rule on Slavery met with the bitterest opposition. All memorials, petitions and papers of every kind on this subject were referred to a special committee. The "Wisconsin Rule" was the only one considered, but it did not have the support of a majority of the committee. Two reports were therefore presented to the Conference, the minority report recommending a radical change while the conservative recommendation was opposed to any effective alteration.⁶⁹ An exciting debate ensued and Bishop Janes feared that the radicals might be successful.⁷⁰ The radical minority report was accepted, 146 to 55; but when the Ayes and Nays were called for, the vote failed of the constitutional two-thirds majority, 122 to 95.⁷¹

Two of the leading figures in this debate were Abel Stevens for the conservatives and Daniel Wise for the radicals. Both had been editors of *Zion's Herald*, which had been made the medium of a bitter controversy between them.⁷² The Conference elected Stevens editor of the official *Christian Advocate and Journal*, while Wise was given charge of the Sunday School publications.⁷² The conservative attitude of the Conference was further indicated in the defeat of William Hosmer as editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate*. Hosmer and Hibbard, the successful candidate, were both ultra-abolitionists but the latter was considered the more temperate of the two. The fact that Hibbard had the support of the conservative Baltimore and New York conference delegations led to the charge that these and other conferences had "entered into a concerted scheme" to defeat abolitionists.⁷³

At only two points were abolitionists successful. It will be remembered that there was considerable agitation over the fact that Sunday School publications and the Tract Society had published nothing which implied a censure of slavery. But Wise, who had been an associate of Garrison, was chosen editor of Sunday School publications, and the future was therefore full of promise for the propagation of anti-slavery doctrines.⁷⁴ And the Tract Committee of the Conference proposed the following resolution which was adopted: "That the Book Agents and Tract Secretary be, and they

hereby are, instructed to publish, in tract form, such anti-slavery matter as the subject of slavery may demand, including Mr. Wesley's *Thoughts on Slavery*."⁷⁵

In the "Pastoral Address" which was prepared by a committee of the delegates, it was maintained that the Methodist Church had always been anti-slavery and that their attitude was unchanged. In proof of their statement that they were considered an anti-slavery Church they cited the fact that one conference had been compelled by a mob to change the place of meeting. They also stated that the Conference debates had shown conclusively that none of the delegates "entertained pro-slavery sentiments" and that there was "little or no mercenary slaveholding" in the denomination. As a reason for the conservative action of the General Conference on the slavery issue they said: "And the effect of such action upon the interests of the border conferences, probably alone prevented a constitutional majority from voting to recommend a change of our General Rule on the subject of slavery." Finally, they recommended: "On this subject be temperate and firm; resisting evil, not with carnal weapons, but with immutable truth—'weapons that are mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds'."⁷⁶

There were two groups in the Church who believed that the Conference had done nothing of consequence on the question of slavery. Cartwright, who represented the conservative element, says that they had reason to expect that, as a result of the political turmoil, they would have trouble in the General Conference on this subject. This was especially true since many of the "preachers who were strongly opposed to slavery, had suffered themselves to become too excited by designing demagogues." He believed that these radicals cared not at all for the welfare of the negro but only for position and power. "But on this, and almost all other long-tried and prosperous regulations of our beloved rules and disciplinary regulations, there were found aboard the old ship ministers enough to keep the old, well-tried vessel well trimmed, and leaving in the distance these innovators and spoilers of ancient Methodism. So may it ever be."⁷⁷ That Cartwright probably had in mind the effect such radical action would have on the work of the northern Church among the negroes appears from his plea: "Let moral suasion be used to the last degree for the sake of

the salvation of the slaveholders and the salvation of the slaves. Let us not take a course that will cut off the Gospel from them, and deliver them over to the uncovenanted mercies of God, or the anathemas of the devil."⁷⁸

The second group condemned the General Conference because they had not done more against slavery, and they were particularly incensed over the election of Hibbard. Michigan conference endorsed the unsuccessful stand of the Conference majority,⁷⁹ which was an implied censure because no radical stand had been taken by the Conference as a whole. The quarterly conference of Harrisonville Circuit, Northwest Indiana conference, passed resolutions in which they declared that they were "opposed to the retention of a single slaveholder" in the Church and condemned the General Conference for their conservatism.⁸⁰ One writer asserted that the lack of legislation by the General Conference on slavery was due to the absence of "backbone" on the part of northern delegates.⁸¹

The controversy over the election of Hibbard centered in the patronizing conferences of that paper. Genesee conference deprecated the attempt to remove Hibbard and gave him their endorsement.⁸² Black River conference took no official action in this question. But a convention of ministers from five patronizing conferences met at Syracuse, New York and formed the "Central New York Publishing Association" with a capital stock of \$20,000. It was held that Hibbard should resign and that if he refused to do so they should publish another paper to be called the "Central New York Independent." The election of Hibbard was considered most unfortunate. Thus, Dr. Bowen, an anti-slavery advocate, declared that slavery was triumphant in both State and Church. He affirmed that the movements of the Methodist Church had "been retrograde for the last four years. Four years ago the slaveholders, or their apologists, dare not look us in the face at Boston. They would hardly venture to admit that they were slaveholders. Everything was done by management. But at Indianapolis they met us in the open field and whipped us in a fair fight. The Northern Conferences are conquered territory. And this was done in an open field fight. The South can have just as many go-over-every-time-they-need-men as will carry the point. No measure fails for want of men . . . The General Conference has

tied our hands. The shadow has gone back ten degrees on the dial. And yet I expected it."⁸³

But while Cartwright and the radicals believed that the General Conference had either marked time or else actually retreated in the presence of the slave power, there were many others who, while recognizing that the action of the General Conference fell short of their hopes, yet saw that abolitionists had gained ground. At least seven conferences adopted resolutions in which they endorsed the republishing of anti-slavery books and tracts, and pledged themselves to circulate them as much as possible.⁸⁴

A beginning had been made towards eliminating slavery from the Methodist Episcopal Church. It is true that only on two propositions—the publication of anti-slavery tracts and the election of an abolitionist as editor of Sunday School publications—were the radicals successful. But compared with the action of the General Conference of 1836 that of 1856 seems extreme indeed. In 1836, there were only fourteen abolition delegates to the General Conference; in 1856, there were enough to constitute a substantial majority. In 1836, two members of the Conference attended an anti-slavery meeting and were roughly handled in consequence; twenty years later, many delegates attended “a public *political* anti-slavery meeting” without the least danger of censure.⁸⁵ And while it is true that the bishops of both 1836 and 1856 were opposed to radicalism in the Church, yet the use of anti-slavery literature by thousands of young people was to powerfully affect the counsels of both Church and State.

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1. Minutes of the Vermont Conference, 1850, pp. 18-19.
 2. Ibid., 1852, p. 20.
 3. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1850, p. 12.
 4. Ibid., 1852, p. 13.
 5. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1852, pp. 20-21. As in Vermont conference, the rule was to affect voluntary slaveholders only.
 6. Fradenburgh, History of the Erie Conference, Volume II., p. 516. The year was 1851.
 7. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1852, pp. 18-19. This proposed rule was similar to that adopted by the Christmas Conference of 1784 and other early General Conferences.
 8. Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XV., No. 1; January 9, 1851.
 9. These were East Maine, Ohio, North Ohio, North Indiana, Michigan and Illinois conferences. The Minutes show no reports on slavery.

10. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XVII., p. 126, col. 7; August 7, 1850.
11. Ibid., Volume XIX., p. 62, col. 6; April 21, 1852.
12. Journal of General Conference, 1852, pp. 16, 22, 23, 35, 37, 38, 39, 40, 47, 54, 55, 61, 68, 69, 73, 74, 103.
13. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin, p. 187. It is interesting to note that a few years before Kingsley had been decidedly conservative. See Supra, p. 196.
14. Quoted in The Liberator, Volume XXII., p. 81, cols. 4-5; May 21, 1852. So far as can be determined nothing was done with this petition. The item is interesting as showing a tendency which existed from even an earlier date, for the western Virginia counties to separate from the eastern.
15. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1855, p. 12. Cf. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 99, col. 1; June 20, 1855.
16. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1853, p. 10. Cf. Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVIII., June 1, 1854 and Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 138, col. 6; August 29, 1855. For Vermont conference see the Minutes for 1853, p. 17; and Ibid., 1855, p. 17.
17. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1854, pp. 29-31. Cf. Ibid., 1853, p. 23; Ibid., 1856, pp. 22-3; and Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 99, col. 1; June 20, 1855.
18. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXV., p. 99, col. 5; June 14, 1854. In the same volume (p. 205, cols. 5-6) is a statement which may furnish the reason for the attitude of the New York paper. In 1854, Captain Smith was convicted of slave-trading by a New York Court. He asserted that twenty vessels had gone out from New York during that year and that thirty-five had sailed the previous year for the purpose of carrying slaves, and that New York was "the chief port of the world for the slave trade." This indicates something of the attitude of New York towards slavery. It is possible that the Methodist editor was affected by the indifference of people towards this evil and was consequently impatient when abolition sentiments were expressed.
19. Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVI., September 2, 1852.
20. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 98, col. 5; June 20, 1855.
21. Ibid., Volume I., p. 127, col. 2; August 10, 1853. Cf. Ibid., Volume II., p. 129, col. 2; August 16, 1854 and Ibid., Volume III., p. 130, col. 7; August 15, 1855.
22. Ibid., Volume III., p. 170, col. 7; October 24, 1855.
23. Minutes of the North Ohio Conference, 1853, p. 33.
24. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin, p. 132.
25. Ibid., p. 139.
26. Minutes of the North Indiana Conference, 1853, pp. 15-16
27. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 69, col. 3; May 2, 1855.
28. Ibid., p. 115, col. 2; July 18, 1855.
29. Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1855, pp. 13-14.
30. Those besides North Ohio were:
 - (1) Troy—see Minutes of Troy Conference, 1854, pp. 44-5.
 - (2) Erie—see Fradenburgh, History of the Erie Conference, Volume II., pp. 517-18.
 - (3) Rock River—see Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1854, p. 26.
31. Minutes of the North Ohio Conference, 1854, p. 35.
32. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin, p. 148. The suggested rule would have forbidden "*The buying, selling, or holding a human being as a slave.*"
33. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 138, col. 6; August 29, 1855.

34. These were as follows:
 - (1) New Hampshire—see Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVIII., June 1, 1854. The vote was 50 to 6.
 - (2) East Genesee—see Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXI., p. 142, col. 6; September 6, 1854.
 - (3) New England—see Minutes of the New England Conference, 1854, pp. 29-31.
35. These were:
 - (1) Vermont—see Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 138, col. 6; August 29, 1855.
 - (2) Black River—see Ibid., p. 98, col. 5; June 20, 1855.
 - (3) East Genesee—see Ibid., p. 138, col. 7; August 29, 1855.
 - (4) Michigan—see Minutes of the Michigan Conference, 1855, pp. 35-6.
36. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXII., p. 161, col. 3; October 10, 1855.
37. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 154, col. 2; September 26, 1855.
38. Ibid., p. 110, cols. 4-5; July 11, 1855.
39. Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVIII., April 13, 1854. Commenting on this conference, the *Northern Christian Advocate* said: "If Baltimore Conference, with Fugitive Slave laws and Nebraska bills pouring down upon it, is disposed to hold on to this rotten plank, we are quite sure that many other conferences will not."
40. Supra, p. 196. See also, Armstrong, The Old Baltimore Conference, p. 302; and Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 81, col. 3; May 23, 1855.
41. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 151, col. 3; September 19, 1855.
42. Ibid., p. 70, col. 5; May 2, 1855.
43. Ibid., p. 81, col. 3; May 23, 1855. See also, Supra, p. 193 for the conference statement.
44. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 99, col. 1; June 20, 1855.
45. Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference, 1855, p. 20.
46. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 181, cols. 1 and 7; November 14, 1855.
47. Ibid., p. 138, col. 6; August 29, 1855.
48. The Liberator, Volume XXIII., p. 159, col. 2; October 7, 1853.
49. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume I., p. 165, cols. 1-3; October 19, 1853.
50. Methodist Quarterly Review, Volume XXXVII., p. 320 (1855).
51. Old South Leaflets, Volume IV., No. 80, p. 11. This is an extract from a sermon by Parker on "The Dangers of Slavery", delivered in Music Hall, Boston, Sunday, July 2, 1854. His statement in regard to the Methodists is as follows: "In 1853 the Episcopal Methodists had 9,438 Sunday Schools; 102,732 Sunday School teachers; 525,008 scholars. There is not an Anti-slavery Sunday-school in the compass of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Last year, in New York, they issued on an average, two thousand bound volumes every day in the year, not a line against Slavery in them. They printed also two thousand pamphlets every day; there is not a line in them all against Slavery. They printed more than two hundred and forty million pages of Sunday-school books, not a line against Slavery in them all; not a line showing that it is wicked to buy and sell a man, for whom, according to the Methodist Episcopal Church, Christ died."
52. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 13, cols. 6-7; January 24, 1855.
53. Ibid., col. 4.
54. Ibid., p. 198, cols. 4-6; December 12, 1855.
55. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXI., p. 190, col. 7; November 29, 1854. His statement follows: "At least eighteen - probably more than twenty - out of the thirty-eight conferences have taken ground in favor of some stronger action against

slavery than is now provided for in the Discipline. They do not agree as to what precise mode of action is best; but they do agree that *something* ought to be done, and that *something* MUST be done at the next General Conference, to compel our brethren to more vigorous efforts for the extirpation of slavery. When these resolutions are presented, as we doubt not they will be, at the next General Conference, by more than one hundred delegates elected on anti-slavery grounds, they will lead to something more than talk. They will be reproduced in some prudent, judicious, effectual disciplinary changes which will convince the world that the Methodist Episcopal Church is earnestly seeking the extirpation of slavery from her communion."

56. New York, New York East, Western Virginia, and Illinois.
57. Ohio and Southern Illinois.
58. New Hampshire, Vermont, East Maine, Erie, Wisconsin, North Ohio, and North Indiana.
59. Troy, California, Maine, Black River, Pittsburg, Wyoming, Oneda, East Genesee, North Indiana, Michigan, Rock River, Indiana, Cincinnati, Iowa and Southeast Indiana.
60. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume III., p. 138, col. 7; August 29, 1855.
61. Ibid., Volume IV., p. 70, col. 7; April 30, 1856.
62. Ibid., Volume III., p. 202, col. 4; December 19, 1855.
63. Methodist Quarterly Review, Volume XXXI., p. 464; July, 1857.
64. Ridgeway, The Life of Bishop Janes, p. 196. Cf. Marlay, Life of Bishop Morris, pp. 274-5.
65. Ridgeway, The Life of Bishop Janes, p. 197.
66. Journal of General Conference, 1856, p. 104.
67. Ibid., pp. 3-5.
68. Journal of General Conference, 1856, p. 183.
69. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin, pp. 159-60.
70. Ridgeway, Life of Bishop Janes, p. 199.
71. Journal of General Conference, 1856, pp. 126-7.
72. Stratton (editor) Autobiography of Bishop Haven, pp. 124-5.
73. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XX., July 24, 1856.
74. The Liberator, Volume XXXI., p. 52, col. 4; March 29, 1861. This information is from a letter written by Gilbert Haven to Garrison.
75. Journal of General Conference, 1856, p. 150.
76. Methodist Quarterly Review, Volume XXXI., p. 461; July, 1857.
77. Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 503.
78. Ibid., p. 129.
79. Minutes of the Michigan Conference, 1856, p. 26.
80. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IV., p. 146, col. 2; September 10, 1856.
81. Ibid., p. 141, col. 4; September 3, 1856.
82. Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1856, p. 25.
83. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XX., August 14, 1856.
84. For the action of the various conferences see the following:
 - (1) Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin, p. 163.
 - (2) Fradenburgh, History of the Erie Conference, Volume II., p. 519.
 - (3) Minutes of the Delaware (Ohio) Conference, 1857, pp. 27-8.
 - (4) Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1857, p. 10.
 - (5) Minutes of the Detroit Conference, 1856, p. 27.
 - (6) Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1856, pp. 22-3.
 - (7) Minutes of the New England Conference, 1856, pp. 22-3, 29-30.
85. Bennett, History of Methodism in Wisconsin, p. 160.

CHAPTER XVII

THE GENERAL CONFERENCE OF 1860

When annual conferences considered the question of slavery within the Methodist Episcopal Church during the quadrennium following the General Conference of 1856, they generally had in mind the action which might be taken by the Conference of 1860. In the first years of this period abolition conferences sought to arouse anti-slavery conviction and spread anti-slavery doctrines among both ministers and people. During the years immediately preceding the General Conference of 1860, abolitionists attempted to secure an effective alteration of the General Rule on Slavery so that this evil might be wholly excluded from the Church. On the other hand, border conferences earnestly entreated northern conferences to make no change in the rule as it then appeared in the Discipline.

To recite the story of abolition conferences during this period would be but a repetition of the account of previous years. In some instances, there seemed to be a tendency in New England and other northern conferences to qualify their condemnation of slavery so that border conferences would not be forced out of the Church. But, on the whole, conferences to the extreme north were very strongly opposed to slaveholding within the Methodist Episcopal Church. Particular attention was given to the attitude of Methodist papers in anti-slavery territory. All publications except the *Christian Advocate and Journal* were heartily commended for their stand against slavery. This official paper, however, which had stood for three decades as the defender of conservatives against abolitionists, was now execrated because it did not assume the radical point of view. The resolution of New England conference that the *Advocate* did "not truly represent the law of our church; as embodied in the Discipline, the views of the majority of the last General Conference, or anti-slavery sentiment demanded by every obligation

of Christianity and humanity in the present dominant position of the slave power,"¹ was typical of statements of other abolition conferences.

In only one section which had previously been favorable to the South was there a change to a more radical position. Beginning with 1858, New York conference declared that they were opposed to slavery and took pleasure in "pointing with just pride" to the "consistent" stand which the Methodist Church had ever taken against slavery, "regarding it as an evil, for the extirpation of which all wise and prudent means" were to be used.² That these ministers were much divided on the subject is evident from the resolution in favor of colonizing negroes in Africa, which had resulted in the "foundation of a Christian Republic," which they believed had "*done more for the elevation of the African race than all other mere human agencies combined.*"³

New York East conference also became more radically opposed to slavery in the Church. In 1857, the first anti-slavery society was formed.⁴ The following year the conference approved the language of the Church in 1784, by which it was declared that slaveholding was contrary to the Golden Rule, the inalienable rights of man and the principles of the American Revolution, and that it was their duty to seek its extirpation from the Church. They also believed it to be their duty to instruct the Church by means of the press and pulpit until the high standards of early Methodists were attained. They favored the emancipation of slaves as "*the requirement of righteousness.*"⁵

The real strength of the conservative party was to be found in conferences of the "Old Northwest" and on the border. Peoria conference approved the work of the Colonization Society, assigning as reasons for their action that the slave trade would be arrested and Christianity introduced into Africa, which was compared to America as a refuge for the oppressed.⁶ Illinois conference was also extremely conservative,⁷ while the only action of Southern Illinois conference in behalf of negroes was to favor the establishment of a school for free colored people to be known as Wilberforce University.⁸ That ministers of Southeastern Indiana conference were conservative seems clear from their resolution

"That we will not meddle with the legal relations of master and slave; but that we will never cease our opposition to the immoralities of the system till slavery is 'extirpated.'"⁹

In this section of the country, Ohio and Delaware conferences were the most conservative. The former rejoiced "in the fact that the M. E. Church has, by her policy and spirit, ever borne consistent testimony against every alliance with it, and ever had in view its final extirpation."¹⁰ The information of this conference seems to have been very deficient, but that of the Delaware conference committee was even more startling. Their resolution "That we rejoice in the fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church has ever been anti-slavery; that from her very commencement she raised her voice against this crying evil, and all along she has spoken in thunder tones from the pulpit and the press"¹¹ would be amusing if it were not such a perversion of the truth. The "thunder tones" of the pulpit and press for half a century had sounded more like the clang of a cat's paw than the voice of an organization in deadly earnest.

Border conferences were very much averse to any change in the sentiment of the Church on slavery, and sought to protect slaveholding in states where they could not be freed according to the laws. Kentucky conference maintained that they had no disposition to continue slavery in the Church "further than is necessary on account of the difficulties attending emancipation," and said that they anxiously awaited "the openings of Providence for its removal in a just, peaceful, and Christian manner." They declared, however, that when earlier leaders pronounced in favor of the destruction of slavery "they did not intend any interference with the rights of those legally connected with the institution."¹²

On the eve of the General Conference of 1860, Western Virginia conference stated their position through a Pastoral Address and a letter from a member of that body.¹³ They protested against substituting mobs for laws and courts and affirmed their allegiance to the state. The anonymous writer declared that enemies of the northern Church, and especially the *Richmond Christian Advocate*, had attempted to show that the members of the conference were disloyal. Through their pastoral letter they had sought to defend themselves against the charges of being pro-slavery, which were preferred by their enemies in the North; and the charges of

being abolitionists, which came from the South. As "Virgin-
ius" expressed it: "We occupy the unenviable position of
being midway between two fires; but the Southern *proslavery*
fire is nearest to us, and against this our chief efforts are
needed. While you charge us with being *proslavery*, they
declare we are *abolitionists*." Both charges were denied with
emphasis. The conference was composed of "anti-slavery
men of the old school—to which belonged our ecclesiastical
fathers of the state, Washington, Jefferson, Monroe, etc."
They regarded slavery as an evil to be gotten rid of but they
were opposed to unlawful methods to obtain their ends. In
conclusion, Virginus said: "We can not but hope that
reasonable men on all sides will, by-and-by, understand our
position, and appreciate our principles. We think they are
those of the 'Pauline Code' and must commend themselves
to sensible men of all parties as scriptural and right. If you
Northern men could only let us alone in this crisis you would
greatly oblige us. If ever there was an inopportune period
for such a movement, as some of you propose, this is the
time. We marvel that you do not see it so. Perhaps you
do."¹⁴

Previous to the General Conference of 1860, East Balti-
more conference passed no resolutions on slavery.¹⁵ Balti-
more conference caused considerable excitement in 1857 by
their resolutions "that we highly deprecate the agitation of
the slavery question which has already resulted to the detri-
ment of the political and religious interests of this country"
and that "as heretofore, we will oppose with equal zeal any
aggressions which shall be attempted by the abolition agita-
tion of the country."¹⁶ Irving H. Torrence introduced a
resolution declaring that it was "inappropriate and injudi-
cious" to bring the slavery question before the conference.
This created so much excitement that the motion was with-
drawn. Henry Slicer asked for a reconsideration of the
resolutions but John A. Collins asserted that, while he
regretted that they had ever been introduced, they dared not
recede from their position or they would wreck the work of
the Church on the border. The motion for reconsideration
was therefore tabled.¹⁷ As a result of this action, Bennett
of Wisconsin conference, charged that these ministers had

departed from "the old Methodist platform on the subject of slavery."¹⁸

The alteration of the General Rule on Slavery was an important topic in abolition conferences. East Maine conference declared that a change was necessary because "under the joint influence of constitutional toleration, verbal defects of the law, and laxity in the administration, two fifths of this anti-slavery church has become one of the most hopelessly pro-slavery ecclesiastical organizations in the land. This moral apostacy in the Church South has preceded, if not produced a gross demoralization of sentiment in all that region, so that what was once bewailed as a terrible though transient evil, is now boldly affirmed to be an equitable, divine, and permanent institution." They therefore asked for such changes of the rule as would destroy all "*sinful slaveholding*." But that this conference was not of the most radical group is apparent from their resolution "That we highly honor our Border brethren; that we sympathize with them in their struggles; and that we solemnly pledge ourselves to prosecute our plans for the purity of our common Zion by constitutional action in a conciliatory spirit."¹⁹

Maine conference was also convinced that the meaning of the rule was not clear.²⁰ These ministers were much more radical and less considerate of border conferences for they declared that while some harm might result to the "border brethren," they considered it expedient to seek the extirpation of slavery from the Church, and their delegates to the General Conference were instructed to work towards that end.²¹ New England conference recommended that the General Conference formulate a rule on slavery and submit it to the various conferences for their approval.²²

The desire for a change of the slavery rule was almost unanimous among northern conferences. Some of them professed to believe that the rule as it was prohibited slavery, yet they desired some kind of a change that would leave no room for doubt on that point. One important step was taken by many conferences to secure united action. A representative from each body was appointed to correspond with persons selected by other groups so that the largest measure of co-operation might be obtained.

Resolutions are many times meaningless and inconsequential. But when, as a result of the adoption of a resolution, loss of prestige, property or numbers ensues, words are more carefully weighed and debated from every angle. Such was the situation in the years from 1858 to 1860. For the Methodist Episcopal Church faced the possibility of serious secessions from border conferences if a radical position on slavery were decided upon. The action of the conferences, therefore, upon the definite proposals submitted to them had a real significance in one of the most crucial periods in the history of the Methodist Church.

Five conferences: namely, New England, Providence, Cincinnati, Erie and Minnesota, proposed specific changes in the rule on slavery. That of Cincinnati conference was the most conservative but was a distinct advance over the existing rule. The other four differed in wording but not at all in purpose. Only the Providence and Erie suggestions met with any considerable response. Each conference had the support of twelve other conferences.²³ But for no resolution did three-fourths of the ministers vote, so that this method of changing the rule had failed as before.

Against these proposed changes border conferences were a unit. Southern Illinois conference declared slavery to be "an unmitigated evil;" approved the attempts being made in Missouri and other states to destroy slavery in the Church when it was done for mercenary purposes and asserted that all slaveholders for gain should be expelled from the Church, yet they resolved: "That we are satisfied with the discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, as it *now* is, on the subject of Slavery."²⁴ They opposed all suggested changes and asserted that the existing rule would "properly regulate, if not entirely extirpate" the great evil. Finally they stated: "Resolved, that we have implicit confidence in our brethren in the border Conferences, that we deeply sympathize with them in the persecutions which they are called to endure; and, inasmuch as they are more interested in the subject than any other portion of the church, that they should be permitted to take the initiative in regard to any change which may be considered necessary." Delegates to General Conferences were instructed to act "in harmony with the fore-

going resolutions.”²⁵ Kentucky conference refused to concur in any of the proposed changes and their delegates were “instructed to use their influence and cast their votes against any change of the General Rule.”²⁶ Western Virginia conference likewise defeated every attempt to alter the rule on slavery.²⁷ Baltimore conference declared that they were “determined not to hold connection with any ecclesiastical body which makes nonslaveholding a condition of membership in the church.”²⁸

In New York, two conferences stood with the border ministers. New York conference voted, 75 to 65, against the Providence resolution. One writer says that the negative vote was returned because not enough ministers of other conferences had voted for the proposed change to constitute a legal majority. He assures us, however, that the conference elected “*progressive*” men as delegates to the ensuing General Conference. Dr. Bangs introduced a resolution “instructing the delegates to vote against any change of the rule on slavery” but this “was laid upon the table by a decisive vote.” The same writer again declared that “the delegation from this conference” was “most decidedly progressive—some say slightly radical.”²⁹ But no action indicating radicalism was taken on any subject connected with slavery.

New York East conference had apparently joined the ranks of the radicals. But the proposition to concur in any of the suggested changes was definite. Prior to 1860 the conference approved the Cincinnati resolution, but in that year they voted to reject all proposals of other conferences.³⁰ That there was tremendous excitement in this body of ministers is evidenced by the action taken on a resolution asking the General Conference “to devise such measures as shall clearly prohibit all slaveholding for selfish or mercenary purposes.” During the debate, Kettel, one of the members, “affirmed most emphatically, *that under God’s providence, slavery in America had been the only thing which had elevated the negro race, and he was a bold man who would dare deny it!* In morals, health, and civilization, the slaves were far above the free negroes.”³⁰ On the first vote, the resolution was lost, 91 to 88. Later enough members

changed their votes so that the recommendation to the General Conference passed by one vote,³¹ yet the conference failed to act in any effective manner on the subject before them.

When the General Conference of 1860 met at Buffalo, the Nation and the Church were in a turmoil. Political parties were choosing their leaders for the coming campaign and it seemed that some radical action would surely be taken by the Church. An unprecedented number of memorials on slavery were presented in favor of a change of the rule.³² The majority of the Committee on Slavery,³³ which was, as usual, composed of one member from each conference, reported in favor of a rule which would forbid "The buying, selling, or holding of men, women, and children with an intention to enslave them."³⁴ For almost two weeks it was the subject of a spirited debate. A substitute motion, providing for the strict interpretation of the existing rule, was tabled, 135 to 85.³⁵ When the vote on the rule was finally taken, it failed, 138 to 74, of having the necessary two-thirds majority.³⁴ Since the same and similar propositions had failed to receive the votes of three-fourths of the ministers in annual conferences there was no possibility of changing the rule on slavery.³⁶

Since these attempts had ended in failure, abolitionists sought to strengthen the chapter on slavery—which could be done by a majority vote. In this they were successful, for the so-called "New Chapter" was adopted, 155 to 58. In answer to the question as to what should be done "for the extirpation of the evil of slavery," they answered: "We declare that we are as much as ever convinced of the great evil of slavery. We believe that the buying, selling, or holding of human beings, as chattels, is contrary to the laws of God and nature, inconsistent with the Golden Rule, and with that Rule in our Discipline, which requires all who desire to remain among us to 'do no harm, and to avoid evil of every kind'. We therefore affectionately admonish all our preachers and people to keep themselves pure from this great evil, and to seek its extirpation by all lawful and Christian means."³⁶

The reason for the conservatism of the delegates is explained by Brunson who says that "the brethren from the

border conferences in which slavery existed, or from the great commercial emporiums whose merchants dealt with the South, and whose interests were as much with the South as if they actually owned slaves themselves, strongly opposed any change of our rules which were deemed an advance toward the ultimate abolition of this 'sum of all villainies'; not because they really favored the system themselves but because it was for the interest of the people they served, to let the system alone, however much wrong it might do the subjects of it, professing to view the evil as incurable."³⁷ Considerable pressure was brought to bear upon these delegates to block all advanced legislation on the subject of slavery, under threat of joining the Church, South; and a like compulsion was exerted upon the delegates from abolition conferences, the members of which, in many instances, threatened to join a more anti-slavery Church if radical action were not taken.³⁸

Having made this radical change in the chapter on slavery, the General Conference became fearful lest they actually had done something that would alienate border conferences from the Church. So, by an almost unanimous vote, they proceeded to nullify the New Chapter by deciding that it "'was in itself so clearly declarative and advisory as not to need any explanation.' It had not, therefore, the force of law."³⁹ The threats of Baltimore and other conferences had had their influence in the counsels of the highest legislative body of the Methodist Episcopal Church.

The results of the General Conference satisfied neither radical abolitionists nor conservatives in slaveholding states. The majority report of the committee on slavery was approved by most northern conferences and the New Chapter was fairly well supported. But New England conference, while commending the advance of abolitionism in the Conference, regretted that a change had not been made "so clearly prohibiting the practice of slaveholding that neither delinquents should be able to escape its penalty, or the different authorities of the Church to give to it diverse interpretations, as seems now to be the case."⁴⁰ And Providence conference, while approving the New Chapter, expressed the fear that bishops and other leaders would evade the New Chapter and

contravene the will of the majority of the General Conference and of the members of the Church.⁴¹

Along the border, conferences sought either to interpret the General Conference action in such a manner that it was completely nullified or else attempted to secure the repeal of the chapter. Southern Illinois conference rejoiced that the Methodist Church had always taken anti-slavery ground and had protested continuously against slavery. But they also asked the "brethren everywhere, to frown upon all attempts for the forcible dissolution of the relation between master and slave, which, by the sanction of municipal law, exists in the slaveholding States of this Confederacy." On the other hand, they demanded the right of free speech on the subject of slavery. Relative to the action of the General Conference of 1860 they said that, while they had been opposed to any change of the Discipline on the question of slavery, they would submit to the General Conference decision. As to the effect of the New Chapter they asserted "that in view of the advisory character of the new chapter on slavery, we regard it as really more lenient to our brethren, who are unhappily connected with slavery, than were the provisions of the former chapter." They were therefore opposed to the secession of any annual conference as a result of this legislation.⁴²

The Baltimore conferences were in open rebellion. A meeting of laymen, in June, 1860, refused to obey the law of the Church, since they considered it "injurious to the Church of God" among them. They expressed the desire that the former rule might still prevail.⁴³ In December of the same year a convention of laymen met in Baltimore. They declared in favor of peace; repudiated the action of the General Conference; and requested Baltimore and other border conferences to secede from the Church. The conferences of the Church were given until December 14, 1861 to call a General Conference for the purpose of repudiating the action of 1860.⁴⁴ That the sentiment of the section around Baltimore was almost unanimously opposed to the action of the General Conference was the opinion of the editor of the *Baltimore Christian Advocate*, who said: "The difference of opinion among us is not serious in kind or extent. There

are a few who approve the action of the General Conference. But, as far as we know, they might hold a mass meeting in an omnibus, and give seats to spectators."⁴⁵

The first meeting of Baltimore laymen was a warning to northern Methodist leaders that secessions from the Church would be very serious unless something were done to pacify border Methodists. It was for the purpose of preventing another rupture of the Church that *The Methodist* was established at New York. In the very first number, the editor took occasion to re-affirm the statement of the General Conference that the New Chapter was only advisory and that "mere advice" was not "a sufficient cause for revolution." The threatened secession was of such a nature that it was believed impossible to justify it before God or the people.⁴⁶

The panic of northern leaders is most easily seen at Baltimore conference, which met in March, 1861. During this conference certain questions were submitted to Bishop Scott, the presiding officer, for authoritative answers. He was asked whether there was anything in the Discipline to prevent the ordination of a local preacher who held slaves; whether there was anything in the Discipline by which a slaveholder could be excluded from the Church, and whether there was anything in the law of the Church which justified an administrator in arraigning a slaveholder as a sinner. All these questions were answered in the negative. The fourth question was whether there was any process authorized by the Discipline by which a member could be brought to trial if he held slaves for gain. Scott replied: "I know of no such process." The fifth question read: "Is the New Chapter to be regarded as containing the doctrine and belief of our Church on slavery?" Scott answered: "The Chapter contains an admonition, and from its position in the Discipline claims to be regarded as expressing the doctrine of the church on slavery." Then the conference asked: "Is not every man a sinner against God, and the laws of nature, and the precepts of the Bible, who holds a slave in the sense of the New Chapter?" Scott diplomatically replied: "He is, in the sense of the Discipline, whatever that sense is." The last question read: "Is it not, under the Discipline, the duty of every member of the church to engage in active efforts

for the abolition of slavery?" And Scott answered emphatically: "Not more under the *present* than under the *former* Discipline."⁴⁷

But if Scott and other bishops hoped to save this conference for the Church they failed miserably. Whether because they were disgusted at the equivocal answers of Bishop Scott or feared that the laymen would support them in no action short of secession is not certain, but the ministers protested against the action of the General Conference,⁴⁸ and, by a vote of 87 to 1, declared themselves "separate and independent" from the Methodist Episcopal Church. Armstrong says they redeemed the promise which had repeatedly been made to their people that they would not submit to the domination of radical abolitionists. Forty-one refused to vote.⁴⁹ Had it not been for the "judicious" rulings of Bishop Scott it is probable that the whole conference would have withdrawn from the northern Church.⁵⁰

Those who withdrew did not immediately join the Church, South. They even claimed to be a part of the northern Church. Their hope was that other conferences would join them and thus form the real Methodist Episcopal Church. The bishops were asked to repudiate the action of the General Conference of 1860.⁵¹ Only a few conferences seem to have considered the recommendation. Upper Iowa conference condemned the "spirit of disloyalty and secession manifested by the Baltimore Christian Advocate" and its supporters, and declared that if the New Chapter did not express the sentiments of the people in the neighborhood of Baltimore, they were "forced to conclude that they" were "anti-slavery only in name."⁵² Minnesota conference passed the resolution: "That we decidedly, unreservedly and perpetually non-concur."⁵³ These are but typical of resolutions passed by several northern conferences.⁵⁴

Just how this situation would have developed under normal conditions can not be determined. For the Civil War cut off most southern ministers so that they could not attend the conference at Baltimore in March, 1862. As a result, only about fifty members, part of whom had approved the action of the previous conferences, met under the presidency of Bishop Janes. All affirmed their allegiance to the north-

ern Church and "by resolution, declared the *majority*, absent thus compulsorily, *withdrawn*, by a vote of 22 to 11." The southern faction continued to meet annually in Virginia, and after the war voted to join the Church, South. Thus the Methodist Episcopal Church lost "one hundred and eight travelling and fifty-seven local preachers, and nearly twelve thousand members."⁵⁵

Outside of the Baltimore conferences, the most serious secessions were in Philadelphia, Western Virginia and Southern Illinois conferences. In the first, Bishop Janes had to use the utmost discretion and tact in placing ministers, and even then many withdrew from the Church.⁵⁶ In Western Virginia conference a close friend of Bishop Simpson wrote that he did not believe that some members would remain with the Church until 1861.⁵⁷ Some ministers in Illinois also withdrew and, in 1866, were received into the southern Church.⁵⁸

The Methodist Episcopal Church had failed in its supreme opportunity to become an anti-slavery Church. Fearful lest there might be some ministers and members who would withdraw from the Church if the rule on slavery were made to completely exclude all slaveholders from the denomination, they continued "so to serve God as not to offend the Devil." But even then they were to fail in their purpose, for border conferences, ministers and members joined the Church, South, with whose principles they had all along been in the fullest sympathy. The freeing of the Church from slavery was to come by a radical and unnatural upheaval rather than by revolutionary methods.

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1. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1857, p. 26. Cf. *Ibid.*, 1858, pp. 23-4.
 2. Minutes of the New York Conference, 1858, p. 22.
 3. *Ibid.*, 1860, p. 33.
 4. The Liberator, Volume XXVII., p. 77, col. 5; May 15, 1857.
 5. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXV., p. 66, col. 6; April 28, 1858.
 6. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IV., p. 161, col. 5; October 8, 1856.
 7. Minutes of the Illinois Conference, 1859, p. 25.
 8. Minutes of the Southern Illinois conference for 1856 and 1857.
 9. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IV., p. 179, col. 2; November 5, 1856.
 10. *Ibid.*, Volume VII., p. 150, col. 5; September 21, 1859.
 11. Minutes of the Delaware (Ohio) Conference, 1859, pp. 25-7.
 12. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VIII., p. 50, col. 3; March 28, 1860.

13. Baltimore Christian Advocate, Volume II., p. 2, cols. 3-4; March 31, 1860.
14. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VIII., p. 57, cols. 3-4; April 11, 1860.
15. See the Minutes of the conference for 1859 and 1860.
16. The resolutions were adopted by the overwhelming vote of 220 to 14.
17. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., p. 47, col. 2; March 25, 1857. Cf. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXI., April 9, 1857. The figures in the two papers are not identical.
18. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., p. 81, col. 4; May 27, 1857.
19. Minutes of the East Maine Conference, 1860, pp. 14-16.
20. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1856, p. 10.
21. Ibid., 1860, p. 14.
22. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1860, p. 18.
23. The General Conference Committee on Slavery reported the following votes on the three most popular resolutions: Cincinnati, 319 for and 1212 against; Providence, 1242 for and 1329 against; Erie, 1795 for and 1416 against. On the Erie resolution the following conferences were overwhelmingly opposed: Baltimore, 149 to 0; California, 56 to 0; East Baltimore, 156 to 0; Kentucky, 16 to 0; Missouri, 42 to 0; New Jersey, 72 to 0; Southern Illinois, 80 to 0; Western Virginia, 72 to 0; Illinois, 115 to 24; Newark, 106 to 37; New York, 146 to 45; and Philadelphia, 169 to 8. (See Journal of General Conference, 1860, p. 425, Appendix GG).
24. Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference, 1858, p. 17.
25. Ibid, 1859, pp. 32-3.
26. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VIII., p. 50, col. 3; March 28, 1860.
27. Ibid., Volume VII., p. 78, cols. 4-5; May 18, 1859. The opposition of the conference to the Cincinnati resolution was based on the belief that "the amendment proposed . . . is unauthorized by apostolic practice; that it involves a wide departure from the policy of the church, hitherto, as manifested down to recent periods in the successive formation of new conferences on the border, without intimation of any such change of rule; that it is to conflict with the whole past history of Methodism, both in England and America; that the church, throughout the entire territory where the proposed rule would have any application, is entirely and decidedly opposed to its enactment; that the proposed rule is needless, and therefore hurtful, threatening to other sections of our Zion, as well as our own, a harvest of profitless questions and abstractions, and regarding, as did our fathers, the present General Rule in the Discipline as prohibiting all traffic in slaves except for merciful purposes."
28. Ibid., Volume VIII., p. 50, col. 2; March 28, 1860. Commenting upon the action of the Baltimore conference, the editor said that in all the history of the Church "we have never conceded the right of any man to hold another as property. We have always been pledged to the work of extirpation, and regard the rebuke to a wholesome agitation as at variance with the spirit of Methodism."
29. Ibid, p. 66, col 3; April 25, 1860.
30. Ibid., cols. 3-4. The attitude of the Southern Church towards such a speech may be seen from the statement of the editor of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*: "If that be conservatism, we would like to know what our northern brethren mean when they talk about the 'pro-slaveryism' of the Southern Church! In all our life long we never heard a Southern Methodist preacher go further than this." (Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXVII., p. 82, col. 4; May 23, 1860).
31. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VIII., p. 66, cols. 3-4; April 25, 1860 and Ibid., p. 74, col. 4; May 9, 1860.
32. Journal of General Conference, 1860, pp. 38, 39, 40, 42, 43, 45, 46,

51, 54, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 66, 68, 69, 70, 71, 72, 74, 75, 79, 80, 81, 82, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 98, 99, 100, etc.

Memorials against a change in the rule were received from "32 conferences." There were "137 memorials, signed, by 3,999 persons, and from 47 Quarterly Conferences." On the other hand, memorials from 33 conferences, "signed by 45,857 persons, and from forty-nine Quarterly Conferences" were received asking for the extirpation of slavery. (*Ibid.*, pp. 425-6). Of the memorials against a change of the rule, 28 were received from within the bounds of the Genesee conference. (*Journal of General Conference*, pp. 39, 44, 45, 50, 59, 77).

33. Calvin Kingsley was Chairman (*Ibid.*, p. 26).
34. *Journal of General Conference, 1860*, p. 216. Cf. Bennett, *History of Methodism in Wisconsin*, pp. 187-8; and Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, pp. 236-7.
35. *Journal of General Conference, 1860*, pp. 220-22, 517-22.
36. Bennett, *History of Methodism in Wisconsin*, pp. 187-8.
37. Brunson, *A Western Pioneer*, Volume II., pp. 282-3.
38. *Ibid.*, pp. 283-4.
39. Ridgeway, *The Life of Bishop Janes*, p. 237. Cf. *Journal of General Conference, 1860*, pp. 261-2. The vote on this resolution was 175 to 6.
40. *Minutes of the New England Conference, 1861*, p. 26.
41. *Minutes of the Providence Conference, 1861*, p. 27.
42. *Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference, 1860*, pp. 30-31.
43. *Minutes and Annals of the Baltimore Conference* (now of the M. E. Church, South). During the years 1862-66, Chapter I., p. 4.
44. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XXIV., December 27, 1860.
45. *Ibid.*, July 12, 1860.
46. Crooks, *The Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 363.
47. *The Liberator*, Volume XXXI., p. 56, col. 5; April 5, 1861.
48. *Baltimore Conference Hand-Book*, pp. 97-9. Found at Randolph-Macon.
49. *Minutes and Annals of the Baltimore Conference*, Chapter I., p. 4. Cf. Armstrong, *The Old Baltimore Conference*, pp. 283-4.
50. Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, p. 244. Scott had the whole-hearted support of Janes on all the answers to the questions submitted.
51. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, pp. 186-7.
52. *Minutes of the Upper Iowa Conference, 1860*, p. 27.
53. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 347, col. 3; October 30, 1861.
54. *Minutes of New Hampshire, Vermont, Troy and East Genesee conferences* have been consulted on this point. East Baltimore conference suggested that the regulations be left to each conference but none but border conferences approved the proposal.
55. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 187.
56. Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, pp. 244-5.
57. Crooks, *The Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 363.
58. Myers, *The Disruption of the M. E. Church*, p. 187.

CHAPTER XVIII

SLAVEHOLDING IN THE METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH

Charges had been freely made by the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, that the northern Church was as fully pro-slavery as itself. It may be said in defense that it takes time to break away from the traditions of the past and that northern Methodists were coming to a position of antagonism to slavery as rapidly as possible. The fact that the General Conference of 1848 made no attempt to destroy slavery may be explained by saying that Church leaders were intent upon the more pressing questions of the division of the Church funds and the intrusion of southern Methodists into northern territory. But after 1850 no such excuses were valid. Whether or not slaveholding was practiced among the membership and ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church, the territory in which it was prevalent, and the number of slaves held by Methodists are the topics to be discussed in the present chapter.

That the Discipline of the Church permitted slaveholding was generally recognized in the North and joyously affirmed by the South. Vermont conference confessed the fact "with shame and sincere sorrow of heart."¹ The editor of the *True Wesleyan* declared that the Discipline of the northern Church explicitly admitted that slaves were in bondage to Methodists, and in proof cited the rule: "All our preachers shall enforce upon *our members* the necessity of teaching *their slaves* to read the word of God."² In 1857, Long insisted that, while three-fourths of the membership, lay and clerical, were anti-slavery, they had a pro-slavery Discipline which permitted members "in Delaware, Maryland, and Virginia to hold for gain, to give away, and transmit by will to their heirs, as chattels personal, souls for whom Christ died. The slaves can be sold for their debts at any time. They can give them away to relatives, who can sell them to the negro buyer at

pleasure; and do all this according to the Discipline of the church; and they cannot be expelled for it.”³

Before the General Conference of 1856 Dr. Watson, editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, had predicted that some decisive action on the question of slavery would be taken by that body.⁴ After the adjournment of that Conference, he maintained that the delegates were unanimously anti-slavery and that the “expressed will of the Church at the late General Conference” was: “Any person holding a human being as a slave, is a sinner, and ineligible to membership.” But the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* cited the fact that there were many slaveholders in the northern Church to prove that Watson’s statement was unreliable.⁵ The very fact that, during the next four years, abolitionists employed every possible method to secure a change of the rule on slavery is conclusive proof that the rule of 1856 was not sufficient to exclude all slaveholders from the Church.

It is true that the “New Chapter” was adopted by the General Conference of 1860, but its force was completely nullified by interpretations given by the Conference and bishops. Bishops Simpson, Janes and Scott did all that was possible to protect slaveholders in border conferences, lest these members be lost to Methodism. Bishop Scott’s official interpretation of the New Chapter before Baltimore conference confirms the conclusions of radicals that the Discipline did not forbid slaveholding.

The General Conference and bishops were not alone in the opinion that the Discipline permitted slaveholding. Again and again, abolition conferences condemned the rules of the Church because they favored slaveholders. Even after the General Conference of 1860 the fear was expressed that the New Chapter would be so construed by bishops that slaveholding could continue among members of the Church as it had previously. Among border ministers there was no question that the Discipline permitted members and local preachers to hold slaves. And the majority of the General Conference stirred them to such an extent that they threatened to withdraw unless the legislation were rescinded.

Thus far we have considered the possibility of Methodists

holding slaves in border conferences and yet being in conformity with the Discipline. That slaveholding was the rule among well-to-do border Methodists was freely charged. Speaking of this section of the country, one minister affirmed: "Many of the stewards are slaveholders. To a great extent this office is represented by the moneyed men in the Church—the large holders of property. One half of the whole number of stewards on those districts are probably slaveholders. . . . Exhorters, leaders and local preachers are slaveholders."⁶ Long mentions two Methodists who died in 1855 and 1856 who left from twenty-five to thirty slaves in bondage for life.⁷ J. G. D. Pettijohn, a member of North Indiana conference, testified that he had seen a class leader of the Church buy a slave girl. The official refused to listen to the mother who begged that her only remaining child should not be separated from her.⁸ H. C. Atwater, of Providence conference, declared that border Methodists were opposed to abolitionists and anti-slavery movements of any kind. "*It matters not how many slaves a man owns, it is no objection to his becoming a member of these mission churches. . . . Thousands of slaves are held without a word of rebuke by the membership, in six of the Conferences of the Northern Church.*"⁹ And the editor of *Zion's Herald*, commenting upon the statement circulated after the General Conference of 1852 that the Methodist Episcopal Church was free from "mercenary slaveholding," said that "there never was a grosser mistake—to call it by no graver name."⁹

The connection of the ministry with slavery was still more emphatically maintained. "Slaveholding in the ministry is the rule," said the editor of the *Northern Independent*, "non-slaveholding the exception. We let all our preachers hold slaves, if they will consent to be local and unordained. We will consent to ordain them, and let them travel, slaveholders though they be, if wicked slaveholders are disposed to make a law forbidding emancipation. . . . It is a well-known fact that many of our local preachers are slaveholders. *No intelligent man will presume to deny this statement.* There never has been any objection to local preachers holding slaves: *the practice is as free to them as to any other*

member of the Church.”¹⁰ A free colored local preacher sold a slave, simply because he had run away, and yet his license was not taken from him.¹¹ Atwater asserts that absolutely no check was put upon slaveholding “travelling” preachers.⁹

The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* challenged Bishop Simpson and Dr. McClintock, who, as delegates to the British Conference had declared that the Methodist Episcopal Church was free from slavery, to deny that there were “many slaveholders and slaveworkers among the private members, and official members, and ministers of the Northern division of the M. E. Church.”⁹ The editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* declared that there were hundreds of members, “including official members and ordained preachers” who owned slaves for the same reason that southern slaveholders did—namely, that it was profitable. Preachers in Maryland and Virginia refused to exclude slaveholders from the Church, and even when they were voluntary slaveholders they were not brought to trial.¹² In answer to a statement of Gilbert Haven that the northern Church had refused to establish fraternal relations with the Church, South, in 1848 because Southern Methodists held slaves and defended the practice, the same editor wrote Bishop Morris: “You have this day many large slaveholders in your division of the Church. You know that in Maryland and Virginia, you have hundreds, yes, thousands of members who hold slaves; that you have ordained to the office and work of the ministry many a slaveholder.”¹³

It was maintained that there were seven slaveholding states, in which the Methodist Church was working, and in which slavery was not prohibited among the members by the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁴ In Philadelphia conference, which included portions of Delaware, Maryland and Virginia, it was persistently stated that there were many slaveholders.¹⁵ This conference refused to entertain charges against the Rev. J. D. Long, apparently because they feared that in condemning his book, “Pictures of Slavery,” unwelcome disclosures might be made.¹⁶ March 30, 1860, Quinn, a slaveholding member, was brought to trial on the charge of “unministerial and unchristian conduct” because of his

relation to slavery. After a very warm and acrimonious debate, his character was passed, 86 to 81.¹⁷ Long wrote that so far as Philadelphia conference was concerned "the *practical and administrative example and influence* of the Church" in Delaware, Maryland and Virginia was "to perpetuate and extend slavery."¹⁸ The extent of the practice of slaveholding may be seen from the statement of one observer that in this conference alone there were fifteen hundred slaveholders.¹⁹

In the region around Baltimore a similar condition existed. J. K. Peck asserted that a majority of the quarterly conference, of which he was a member for a year, "were slaveholders for gain."²⁰ A local preacher of Baltimore conference sold a slave to a slavetrader but remained a local preacher; and a prominent member of the Church in the same conference sold a mother and five children at public auction. Of these slaves, one trader bought the mother and one child while the rest were sold to other parties. And yet these practices were not rebuked by ministers; in fact, the authority for the incident asserts that some ministers told their members that they might "buy as many slaves as they could pay for."²¹

The situation does not seem to have been materially different in Western Virginia. It was claimed that a northern Methodist preacher of the region owned and sold slaves.²² The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* is authority for the charge that a presiding elder of this section, and a delegate to the General Conference of 1852, was a slaveholder "to all intents and purposes." Another presiding elder owned slaves in 1851 but sold them and kept the money. With biting sarcasm Garrison wrote: "And yet Northern Methodist ministers are continually representing their Church as free from all taint of slavery."²³

In Missouri, slaveholding was also practiced by northern Methodists. The editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* said that less than fifty of the five thousand five hundred members of the northern Church in the state held slaves, but he also maintained that many northern Methodists joined the southern Church as soon as they arrived in the slave state.²⁴ The consistency of many northern Methodists may

be inferred from the statement of one southerner who asserted that in his section of the country there were a hundred of them who demanded a northern preacher, and yet, said he, "every one of them that can raise the money buys negroes and works them as hard as any Southern planter."²⁵

As to the number of slaveholders and slaves among the members of the Methodist Episcopal Church there is considerable variation in the estimates. In 1845 one writer believed there were "about 80,000 slaves in the Methodist Church in America, as members."²⁶ Five years later a northern minister placed the number of slaveholders at four thousand and the slaves at twenty-seven thousand.²⁷ In 1860, the editor of the *Northern Independent* declared that there were thirty-five thousand slaves owned by northern Methodists who were members in good and regular standing and acknowledged as Christians.²⁸ Still another anti-slavery advocate wrote: "We speak of the Methodist Episcopal Church, *North*, which Bishop Simpson and Dr. M'Clintock stated, before the English Conference of 1857, to be free from the stain of slavery, but which we are prepared to show has at this moment (1860) some 15,000 slaveholders in its communion, holding about 100,000 slaves. Our object is not to make any man a liar, but to elicit the truth."²⁹ Whether the writer was himself telling the truth can not be determined. To reconcile the estimates is impossible. But one fact remains certain: that slaves were held in considerable numbers by northern Methodist members, officials and ministers, at least until 1864.

The condemnation visited upon the *Advocates* of Baltimore and New York by abolitionists indicates that these papers were either apologizing for, or sympathetic with, slaveholders and slavery. Concerning the former there can be no question at all; relative to the latter one incident gives some indication of its attitude. In 1852 or 1853 a slaveholder, Mr. George Gorsuch, was killed by his slave in Pennsylvania. Subsequently, there was published in the *Christian Advocate and Journal* a memoir of the deceased in which it was asserted that Gorsuch was "one of the brightest ornaments of the Church. A consistent, meek,

and holy Christian, in the best and truest sense of the word." Of course, no editor would care to be held responsible for the obituaries which appear in the columns of his paper! But this statement was protested by a member of New York East conference, who affirmed that to commend such a man was "to insult the moral sense of nineteen-twentieths of the M. E. Church." The responsibility of Dr. Peck, the editor, began at this point, for the protest was returned with a refusal on his part to publish it.³⁰

Both southerners and abolitionists were quick to point out that, so far as the practice of the two churches was concerned, they were a unit in their attitude towards slavery. One southern leader contended that the "preachers and people of the *Northern* division of the Methodist Episcopal Church hold slaves as truly as those of the *Southern* division."³¹ The editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* emphasized the fact that the southern Church was being condemned for doing exactly what the northern Church was continually practicing. Both communions had members who were slaveholders; deacons and elders who owned slaves; and ministers were chosen for their work in exactly the same way in both Churches. Those of the northern Church "were ordained by the laying on of the hands of the Bishop. Bishop Waugh, Bishop Morris and Bishop Janes, to my certain knowledge, have each ordained slaveholders to the office of deacon and elder. *Where, then, is the difference?*"³² And the simple fact was—and many in the North were ready to confess it—that there was no difference between a slaveholder in the northern Methodist Church and one in the Church, South.

Northern Church leaders had contended that they were standing for a principle when they deposed Bishop Andrew; when they refused fraternal relations with the southern Church in 1848; and when they proclaimed that they represented the anti-slavery organization, while the Church, South, was composed largely of slaveholders. But the editor of the *Northern Independent* exploded this theory when he wrote: "The question of principle does not divide the Church North from the Church South, so far as its practice is concerned. It is a question of quantity more than of quality

—a question of retail versus wholesale. The Church South does a wholesale business in human slavery; the North, a retail business in this abomination. *On the score of consistency, the South has decidedly the advantage.* It says that slavery is a divine institution, and consequently takes it to its bosom. The Church North says, 'It is the vilest thing that ever saw the sun,' and yet refuses to thrust it out of its communion."³³

1. Minutes of the Vermont Conference, 1856, p. 15.
2. The Liberator, Volume XXIII, p. 159, col. 2; October 7, 1853.
3. Long, Pictures of Slavery in Church and State, pp. 33-4.
4. Supra, pp. 209-10.
5. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XX., September 18, 1856.
6. Pullen, Blast of a Trumpet in Zion, p. 24.
7. Long, Pictures of Slavery in Church and State, pp. 31-4.
8. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXII., p. 78, col. 3; May 16, 1855.
9. Quoted in The Liberator, Volume XXXI., p. 54, col. 3; April 5, 1861.
10. Ibid., cols. 3-4.
11. Pullen, Blast of a Trumpet in Zion, p. 26.
12. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XX., September 18, 1856.
13. The Liberator, Volume XXXI., p. 54, col. 4; April 5, 1861. The New Hampshire conference of 1846 had the same idea as Haven. "That we consider it a matter of joy and of devout thanksgiving and praise to God, that there is not a slaveholder in the travelling ministry of the M. E. Church of the United States of America." (Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1846, p. 15).
14. The Liberator, Volume XXIII., p. 159, col. 2; October 7, 1853. There were eight slaveholding conferences in the northern Church: namely, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Pittsburg, Ohio, Western Virginia, Indiana, Illinois and Missouri. (Ibid., XVIII., p. 154, cols. 3-4; September 29, 1848).
15. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXIX., p. 98, col. 1; June 23, 1858.
16. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXIII., April 15, 1859.
17. Ibid., Volume XXIV., April 19, 1860.
18. Pullen, Blast of a Trumpet in Zion, pp. 23-4.
19. Ibid., pp. 17-19, 22. Cf. The Liberator, Volume XXII., p. 81, cols. 1-2; May 21, 1852.
20. Peck, Stevens answered in his appeal to the M. E. Church, p. 30.
21. The Liberator, Volume XXII., p. 81, cols. 1-2; May 21, 1852.
22. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXI., July 30, 1857. The editor, on another occasion, related the story of a slave who had been sold to a trader who took the negro further south. He declared that this was the same slave who had been sold to a brutal slave-trader by a Methodist preacher of the northern Church a few years before. The character of this trader was likened to that of Legree in "Uncle Tom's Cabin." The slave had been handcuffed while the preacher looked on. The editor commented: "The church south don't do such things. It would not tolerate such a slave-holder in its communion an hour." (Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XVII., September 8, 1853).
23. The Liberator, Volume XXII., p. 81, cols. 4-5; May 21, 1852.
24. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., February 23, 1860.
25. Ibid., Volume XIV., No. 17; February 22, 1850.

26. *The Liberator*, Volume XV., p. 73, col. 3; May 9, 1845. The article is quoted from the *Glasgow Argus* of March 24, 1845. Henry C. Wright of Philadelphia was the author.
27. Parker Pillsbury's statement in *The Liberator*, Volume XX., p. 24, col. 3; February 8, 1850.
28. *The Liberator*, Volume XXX., p. 119, cols. 3-4; July 27, 1860.
29. Pullen, *Blast of a Trumpet in Zion*, p. 8.
30. *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18. Cf. *The Liberator*, Volume XXII., p. 81, cols. 1-2; May 21, 1852.
31. *The Liberator*, Volume XXXI., p. 54, col. 3; April 5, 1861.
32. *Ibid.*, col. 4.
33. *Ibid.*, cols. 3-4.

CHAPTER XIX

SOUTHERN METHODISM AND SLAVERY

The decade preceding the Civil War witnessed the consummation of the desires of the pro-slavery party in the Methodist Episcopal Church, South. Slight though the restraints of the Church had been which kept the pro-slavery extremists within certain bounds, even these were thrown aside as soon as it became expedient to do so. Gradually but surely the defense of the conservative party was broken down and the southern Church came to be an important bulwark of the pro-slavery party.

The two parties in the South—conservative and extreme pro-slavery—were composed of earnest and devout men. The attitude of the former group was maintained in the face of threats of radical southerners. A correspondent of the *Holston Christian Advocate* declared that Methodists in the South never had been and were not then pro-slavery in their sentiments. They disapproved the system of slavery but accepted it as “necessary and unavoidable” for their section.¹ Another writer said that in Missouri there were no slave-traders among Methodist ministers, and that he knew of only one case in which a minister had bought a slave and then it was a case of Christian benevolence.² Always, southern Methodists returned to the teachings of Bible characters—especially Paul—to show that, in not seeking the utter destruction of slavery, they were following in the footsteps of those worthies.³

The ultra party of the Church, South, condemned the principles of abolitionists in both North and South. Southern Methodists did not tamely submit to denunciations by ultra-abolitionists of the Garrisonian school. The condemnation of the churches by Theodore Parker⁴ was scarcely more scathing than that heaped upon abolitionists by Dr. Baker of the *Nashville Christian Advocate*. He undoubtedly represented a large number of southerners who considered north-

ern radicals hypocritical and ignorant of the divine plan for the negro race. Northern abolitionists had kept the nation in an uproar through Congress; they were destitute of truth, and Frederick Douglass, Garrison and others, having rejected the Bible, were to be classed as infidels. Self-interest was declared to be the reason for the exertions of abolitionists. "For the abolitionist," said Baker, "steals negroes for pay and takes their labor for nothing. He lectures for the luxury of beholding rosy cheeked damsels weep, and that chicken-pie and plum-pudding may vanish before his voracious appetite."⁵

Not only were Garrisonian radicals condemned but publications of the northern Church were also censured. A meeting at Bothesville, Virginia, passed a resolution against official northern Methodist papers because they had "become abolition sheets of the rankest character," and they asked attorneys and post-masters of the state "to examine them, and if found to be of unlawful character, to deal with them and their agents as the laws of our State direct."⁶

After the northern General Conference of 1856, when the Tract Society was instructed to publish anti-slavery documents, the editors of *Advocates* at Charleston and Richmond withdrew their support from this organization. The Tract Society had resolved "to treat of 'the moral evils and vices which slavery is known to promote,' as it would other vices and evils."⁷ Dr. Lee declared that the Tract Society had outlived its usefulness so far as the South was concerned. "For years we have commended and co-operated with this Society. We considered it American, and believed it Christian. It ceases in both respects; it has become sectional in character and abolitional in its objects. As at present constituted, it is an enemy of the South. The Philistines have conquered it, changed it, subsidized it to their disorganizing and vicious objects; denuded it of its virtues, and debauched it by a union with the most graceless and brazen-faced ism of the day."⁷

For those Methodists who opposed the pro-slavery tendency of the southern Methodist Church and people, the ultra party had nothing but contempt and persecution. Two Wesleyan preachers, Crooks and McBride, were driven from North

Carolina by pro-slavery mobs because they preached against slavery to audiences composed of people who were sympathetic with their cause.⁸ The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* condemned some abolitionists in North Carolina for their work among the slaves and asserted that the southern Church was sending the Gospel to the negroes as fast as possible.⁹ By a Virginia paper, Baltimore conference ministers were considered "the most deadly foes" to southern institutions and it recommended that they be expelled from the state and that the southern Methodist Church commence work in towns and cities of Virginia where the northern Church was then established. "Let the good work commenced continue till the whole valley and western portion of Virginia are cleansed of the foul leprosy of anti-slavery Methodism."¹⁰

If pro-slavery advocates condemned the propagandists from the North, they were still more incensed at those of their own number who refused to accede to their demands. In Mississippi when seven members of Mississippi conference voted against striking out the rule on slavery in the Discipline, several papers demanded to know who the seven "negro worshippers" were. They promised "advertisement free of cost" so that they should be "known all over the country."¹¹

That southern Methodist leaders were one with pro-slavery men there seems to be no doubt. Lee held that slavery was approved by the Bible and protected by the Constitution, and that it had advanced civilization here more rapidly than in any other country. On the other hand, abolitionism was held responsible for retarding the progress of the nation.¹² When Dr. Smith delivered an address at the southern General Conference of 1854 in favor of slavery, one southern editor wrote that it was "a most masterly defense of the south and her institutions."¹³ Another southerner interpreted Wesley's "Thoughts on Slavery" as being opposed, not to the domestic slave trade, but to the African slave trade only.¹⁴ And when South Carolina conference followed the precedent established by the General Conference of 1808 and used the Discipline without the section on slavery, the *Southern Christian Advocate* approved. "The souls of men

are more important than the dead letter of an obsolete law. Nay, the very respect for the Constitution of the Church, embodied in the Discipline which all of us ardently desire to see maintained and deepened, *demands that the dead fly in the pot of precious ointment should be got out of it, at all hazards—by the conservative power of an Annual Conference brought up in an emergency for self protection, if by no other means.*"¹⁵

So pro-slavery did the southern Church become that the editor of the *Memphis Advocate* was accused of favoring the slave trade, although he was supposed to have advised that it was "well to have pens to put slaves in before sold, rather than have them kept out of doors exposed to the weather and, of course, liable to damage in their health, good looks, etc., in consequence of such outdoor exposure."¹⁶ Elliott declared that the southern Methodist Church was decidedly pro-slavery. In proof he cited an advertisement of an auctioneer in an official paper. This auctioneer desired to sell all kinds of property, including slaves. Said Elliott: "Can there longer remain a doubt in the mind of any one as to the position of this Church on the subject of human bondage, when, as in the above instance, her official organs advertise for sale in market, like beasts of the stall the souls and bodies of men, women and children! No marvel that they expunge the old Methodist rule."¹⁷

With a large number of the leaders, both within and without the Church, pro-slavery in their sentiments, it was only natural that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, should seek the elimination of the Disciplinary rule on slavery. The General Conferences of 1846 and 1850 refused to act on such a change because they feared that border conferences might return to the fold of the northern Church. But during the decade prior to the Civil War southern leaders became increasingly desirous of extirpating the section of the Discipline which forbade slaveholding of any kind.

The action of official conferences of the Church, South, shows an unmistakable trend towards the extreme pro-slavery position. In 1854, the General Conference made a determined effort to strike out the rule on slavery. But

they lacked seven votes of the constitutional two-thirds to make such action valid.¹⁸ Therefore the rule remained in the same words as in 1846;¹⁹ and precisely as it was in the Discipline of the northern Church, both before and after the division took place. But that the sentiment was very strong against the retention of the rule may be inferred from the interpretation put upon it by the Conference; namely, that it referred to the foreign slave trade only. In this action they were undoubtedly supported by the secular press of the South. One editor wrote: "The Methodist Church has thus placed itself upon scriptural foundations upon this subject, and deserves, and will receive the commendation of the southern people for its bold and manly assertion of the apostolic doctrine upon this vexed question in the face of the insane clamors of wild fanaticism which has substituted its puling philanthropy for the Word of God."²⁰

In 1857, Alabama conference passed a resolution asking the General Conference of 1858 to expunge the General Rule forbidding the "buying and selling men, women and children with an intention to enslave them,"²¹ and the bishops were requested to present their memorial to the other conferences for their approval.²² Western Virginia conference voted, 22 to 12, to expunge the rule.²³ The most serious opposition was encountered in Kentucky conference, where the vote was 43 to 18 in favor of retaining the rule.²⁴ That the more southerly conferences were almost unanimously for the change is certain from the fact that, of the 1,471 votes cast, only 311 were for non-concurrence.²⁵

With the sentiment so overwhelmingly for expunction of the rule, the General Conference of 1858 proceeded to carry out the wishes of the majority. The phraseology of the rule was declared to be ambiguous, and it was feared that it might "be construed antagonistic to the institution of slavery, in regard to which the Church has no right to meddle, *except in enforcing the duties of masters and servants* as set forth in the Holy Scriptures." The committee urged that the General Conference expunge the rule against slavery and also withdraw their statement of 1854 that the rule applied only to the foreign traffic in slaves. The General Conference

responded to the recommendation of the committee by an affirmative vote of 140 to 8.²⁶

Owing to the fact that some conferences had not voted on the proposed change previous to the General Conference, the latter body considered it necessary to submit the change to another vote of the annual conferences. That these readily assented to the General Conference action may be easily imagined. Even Kentucky conference reversed its vote of the previous year and concurred in the expunction of the rule by a large majority. When Stevenson attempted to have a resolution passed in which the conference should go on record against the African slave trade, it was declared out of order since the General Conference resolutions included an abrogation of their statement of 1854 that the rule applied only to the African slave trade. One man asked for the privilege of protesting against the expunction of the rule and of having his protest entered in the "Journal" of the conference. This was permitted, and in 1859 the Rev. D. Wilburn presented his reasons against the elimination of the rule from the Discipline.²⁷

Of the minority who stood so staunchly against further concessions to the pro-slavery party, the Rev. D. Stevenson was one of the most prominent. He opposed the change in the rule because he said the southern Church had virtually pledged itself not to make any further concessions to slavery; because, if this concession were granted, then more would be asked of the Church by the pro-slavery party; the language of the General Conference was considered "too non-committal" on the question of re-opening the African slave trade; and finally, if the interpretation of the rule made in 1854 were correct there was no necessity for a change in order to keep on good terms with slaveholders because that traffic was outlawed by the United States Government. Stevenson represented the few in the South who, just before the Civil War, dared to defy slaveholders within and without the Church.

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had become avowedly pro-slavery. That which had been done by the Methodist Church in the South for three-quarters of a century without the sanction of the Church was now pro-

claimed the official sentiment of the southern Methodist Church. Just a half century after the General Conference of 1808 passed the resolution by which the Discipline used in South Carolina was not to contain the rule on slavery, the General Conference of the southern Church completely destroyed all opposition to slavery.

1. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XVIII., p. 138, col. 7; August 27, 1851.
2. Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XV., No. 19; May 15, 1851.
3. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VII., p. 54, col. 7; April 6, 1859.
4. Supra, p. 209.
5. The Liberator, Volume XXIII., p. 125, col. 1; August 12, 1853.
6. Olmstead, Journeys and Explorations in the Cotton Kingdom, Volume II., p. 140, footnote.
7. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., p. 90, col. 7; July 10, 1857.
8. The Liberator, Volume XXVII., p. 129, cols. 5-6; August 14, 1857.
9. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXII., p. 182, cols. 5-6; November 14, 1855. Elliott asked, if this were true, why the negroes were not taught to read the Bible, and why the whites did not enforce marriage chastity among the slaves.
10. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 107-8.
11. Ibid., pp. 108-9.
12. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VIII., p. 66, col. 5; April 25, 1860.
13. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXI., p. 94, col. 3; June 14, 1854. Cf. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 37.
14. Ibid., Volume XXIII., p. 162, col. 6; October 8, 1856.
15. Pittsburgh Christian Advocate, Volume XVIII., p. 209, cols. 1-2; July 8, 1851. Cf. Southern Christian Advocate, Volume XIV., p. 26, cols. 3-4; July 19, 1850.
16. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXII., p. 27, col. 1; February 14, 1855.
17. Ibid., Volume XXV., p. 102, col. 6; June 30, 1858.
18. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXII., July 15, 1858.
19. The Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, 1854, p. 30.
20. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXV., p. 94, col. 5; June 14, 1854.
21. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 108, 110.
22. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., p. 6, col. 7; January 14, 1857.
23. Ibid., p. 162, col. 6; October 14, 1857.
24. Stevenson, Journal, Volume I., pp. 152-3. In another source the vote of Kentucky conference is given as 44 to 16 (Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., p. 162, col. 6; October 14, 1857) Stevenson's whole attitude was very judicious; he was, moreover, a careful observer. This difference is not important, but I am inclined to accept his figures.
25. Journals of the General Conference of the M. E. Church, South, 1858, p. 443.
26. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 110.
27. Stevenson, Journal, Volume I., pp. 160-63. Stevenson's account is worth preserving. He says "As secretary, I called the roll. Various members of Conference took occasion to explain their position. While calling the roll I jotted down heads of such objections to the expunction of the rule as occurred to me, and at the proper time urged them. They were in substance these: First, that at

the time of the division of the Church in 1844-5 we had virtually pledged ourselves to retain the rule, affirming that it was not our purpose to encourage a more pro-slavery spirit that then existed in the Southern portion of the Church—*Secondly*, that I knew not when we would end if we broke down the barrier to an extreme pro-slavery sentiment—that some of the members of the recent General Conference at Nashville had expressed themselves favorable to a re-opening of the African Slave trade, and that that sentiment seemed to be spreading in the church, and that the retention of the rule seemed to be necessary to prevent its prevailing generally in the South; *Thirdly*, that the language of the General Conference was too non-committal on that subject, and *Fourthly*, that we hitherto interpreted the rule to refer to the African, and not to the domestic, slave trade, and that if that interpretation was the true one, there could be no necessity for the expunction of the rule, in order to avoid offending the sensibilities of the members of the church who were involved in slaveholding, so long as the African slave trade was prohibited by the Constitution and laws of the land. In concluding my remarks—which were more extended than those of any other member of the Conference, I said that while I might not agree with all the views of the people in the north, I certainly did not like the tendencies in the South and that I had gone as far in a pro-slavery direction, as I expected to go—'Not another step will I go in that direction,' were, I think, my words. Had the rule not been in the Discipline, I might probably not have been concerned to have it there. But once there, and in view of our past and prospective history as a Church, I regarded the reasons given by the enemies of the rule as insufficient for its expunction.

"The Conference had turned completely about in one year—The vote being taken, resulted in showing a large majority in favor of the expunction of the rule. Of course many of those who had voted against its expunction the year before had, from some cause, probably from the overwhelming influence of the General Conference vote and the position of the Church papers, been induced to change their ground."

CHAPTER XX

THE NORTHERN INVADERS

The excitement among southerners—and especially Methodists—because of northern Methodist attacks was intense. But that which aroused the bitterest antagonism in the South, both within and without the Methodist Church, was the “invasion” of their territory by northern Methodists. Many laymen migrated to the South and Southwest and in several instances asked that northern preachers be sent to them. The very fact that the northern Methodist Church claimed to be anti-slavery led to the proscription of all members of that denomination. Resolutions of New England and other conferences were cited to show that northern Methodists were as truly abolitionists as Garrison himself.

Radical Methodists in the North undoubtedly contributed to the antagonism of southerners towards northern preachers and laymen in their communities. H. C. Atwater, of Providence conference, condemned northern preachers in Missouri because they were not as radical as himself. He also urged that no more missionary supplies should be sent to the Southwest until preachers from the North adopted the most extreme anti-slavery principles. His statements were published in a pro-slavery paper at Hannibal, Missouri, and caused northerners considerable trouble.¹ Another prominent Methodist abolitionist who aroused the wrath of the pro-slavery element was William Hosmer, the editor of the *Northern Independent*. His two chief contentions were that slaveholders could not be Christians — provided that slavery was a sin; and that a slave who refused to fight for his independence and his rights was “not worthy of freedom,” and could not be considered a Christian if he continued in slavery after his conversion. Since this was an appeal to the slaves to rise against their masters, members and ministers of the northern Church naturally suffered as a result.²

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was officially opposed to the intrusion of northern preachers. Editors of the *Advocates* at Charleston and Richmond urged that all denominations hold the same views as the Methodist, and suggested that no church with contrary views on the question of slavery should be tolerated and supported by southern people.³ Further, the views of Bishop Pierce were given the widest publicity by the southern Methodist press. The bishop suggested that there was plenty of room in their own territory for northern preachers to work and that they ought not to come where they were not wanted.⁴ By 1860, Pierce had become even more radical against northern Methodists. Writing from California in October of that year, he declared that they came "into the slave States as open, declared enemies of the institutions of the people" and that according to their own statement they could "not be faithful to God without aiding and abetting runaway slaves. They must sympathize with arson, blood, and murder, insurrection and carnage." Further he said: "For these reasons, *abolitionists* can not and ought not to be tolerated in the Southern States. No quarantine will justify their admission, no fumigation can disinfect them. Rank, rotten with the foul virus of an incurable disease, foes of God and man, spies and traitors of their country and their kind, let them stay where they belong!"⁵

That leaders of the Methodist Episcopal Church who were responsible for the missionary endeavor in the South and Southwest had no intention of destroying slavery in that section or assisting any slave to escape from his master is beyond question. To meet the statements of radicals like Atwater, Durbin wrote several articles for northern Methodist papers. In these he maintained that "the apostles admitted and retained slaveholders in the Churches which they organized and governed; yet under a discipline subversive of slavery"; and that the churches which followed did likewise.⁶ Bishop Morris disclaimed all knowledge of, or responsibility for, Atwater's letter and the principles which it set forth. He declared that, while the Methodist Episcopal Church was "opposed to all sorts of wickedness"—in which was presumably included slavery, although the

bishop did not specifically say that either he or his followers were anti-slavery—they were always obedient to the civil authorities. He asserted that the reason for sending northern preachers into the South and Southwest was simply that certain groups desired to bring salvation to as many sinners as possible. "Whoever charges us with sending them for any political or sinister purpose, or to accomplish any object other than to feed the flock of Christ and save the souls of the people, does us great injustice."⁷ Against the contention of Dr. Watson, editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, that the work of the northern Church should be discontinued in slaveholding states, Elliott asserted that this was a most promising field and that the holding of these places by the Methodist Episcopal Church kept the people from becoming wholly pro-slavery.⁸

The hatred of southerners for northern preachers was concentrated upon conferences which assembled in southern territory, and upon the boldest missionaries. Thus there was considerable opposition to the meeting of Kentucky conference in 1859. A correspondent of a radical pro-slavery paper declared that the twenty-four ministers and two thousand four hundred and ninety-six laymen were attempting to abolish slavery in the state. He therefore urged that Methodists from the North should be driven out. The editor of this paper, the *Cynthiana News*, approved the suggestion of his correspondent. The ministers were called a "band of incendiaries" who were meeting "for the purpose of perfecting their plans of abolitionism." The editor concluded: "We would as soon believe that the people of Germantown would permit a convention of horse-thieves to be held there, as allow men entertaining such unconstitutional and traitorous principles, as those who belong to the Conference. . . . The people in that section have driven others out, and we hope they will give a cold reception to this Northern Conference, which is headed by Bishop Simpson." But, in this instance, the people refused to rally against the northern Methodists.⁹

In 1855, Missouri conference was to have met at Independence. So great was the opposition to northern Methodists that a public meeting was called and resolutions adopted,

in which it was stated that it was deemed inexpedient for the conference to assemble at that place because of its nearness to Kansas and the consequent excitement, and that if the meeting were persisted in they would refuse to be responsible for the results which might follow. The ministers therefore decided to hold the conference in St. Louis. Scriptural authority for such a move was found by members of Ebenezer Church in that city, who said the change would be "in accordance with the pacific precept of the Great Head of the Church to his first disciples—'If they persecute you in one city, flee to another.'"¹⁰

A week before Arkansas conference met at Bonham, Texas, on March 11, 1859, a meeting of citizens was held at Millerwood, where northern Methodists were censured because they held principles "in violation of the laws of their country." A Bonham editor published an account of the meeting and warned northern Methodists against a possible visitation on the part of pro-slavery citizens. On the first day of the conference, two southern Methodist preachers, Dickson and Porter, were present "as observers, spies, and reporters." The following day, citizens of the vicinity met in Bonham to consider their future action.

The purpose of the meeting was to condemn northern Methodists as abolitionists and the conference as inimicable to the interests of the South. Resolutions of northern conferences were read to prove the radicalism of the northern Church. Judge Roberts, a southern Methodist, asserted that the two Methodist bodies differed only on the question of slavery. While he said he "was not in favor of mob law," yet the people were urged to deal with the situation as it required. A southern minister, A. W. Brown, also addressed the citizens and expressed his pleasure that decisive action was about to be taken against a Church which, he declared, was "abolition to the core." A committee, of which Judge Roberts was a member, drew up a preamble and seven resolutions against the "secret foe" which was in the community. Since the teachings of the northern Church were declared distasteful to that community, the northerners were ordered to discontinue them. The motto of the group was "Peaceably if we can, forcibly if we must," and they

united to suppress the public or private expression of any abolition doctrines in the community. A committee composed of fifty people of whom Brown was one, was charged with the responsibility of conveying the resolutions to the Methodist conference.

Sunday morning, about two hundred pro-slavery men rode to the church where the bishop was preaching the sermon. They were "armed with revolvers and bowie-knives," thus giving the impression that they were ready to take extreme action. Bishop Janes was interrupted, while Judge Roberts read the resolutions of the meeting of the previous day and commented upon them. The conference was given only two hours to return an answer. The company then withdrew and the service continued. At its conclusion, the conference decided to refer the question to the laymen for their decision. The pro-slavery group was informed of their decision and the southerners dispersed. On the following day, the southerners re-assembled, heard the report of the committee and listened to numerous speeches. The burden of the remarks of some of the speakers seemed to be that northern Methodists were succeeding in building up a stronger membership than that of the Church, South.¹¹

As to the responsibility for the action taken against the conference, southern pro-slavery men assumed that fully. But they denied that the people composing the company was in fact a mob. However, it is impossible to believe that this "citizens' meeting" was anything other than a mob, even though it was composed of leaders of the community. In the North, the southern Methodist Church was given the credit for the insult to northern Methodists. Bishop Janes did not blame the southern Church alone but only to the extent that the Church approved and justified the mob. He believed, however, that southern Methodist leaders would "at least hold the clothes of those who threw the stones."¹²

It is true that the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, did not officially urge citizens of Texas to threaten Arkansas conference. But that leaders of that Church ever raised their voices against the mobs does not appear. On the

other hand, the editor of the *Texas Christian Advocate* approved of everything that was done and said: "We did do it, and should do it again; if that is mobocracy, all concerned are welcome to make the most of it."¹³ And, writing relative to this trouble and the protest of northern Methodist papers, the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* advised: "Preach the gospel, brethren, the whole gospel, and nothing but the gospel, and you will not be molested anywhere in the South. Confine yourself to this one thing, and you are safe in Texas. It is not as gospel ministers that you meet trouble, but as anti-slavery agitators—as those who propose and pledge themselves to extirpate a civil institution delicately and yet powerfully interwoven with the structure of Southern society. A revival is what is wanted, not an insurrection."¹⁴

It was especially upon individual ministers that southerners wreaked their vengeance.¹⁵ In 1853, Charles F. Kelly escaped from the penitentiary at Ft. Madison, Iowa. February 13, a Methodist minister, Charles H. Kelly, was arrested at Chambersburg, Missouri, by a man named Tradue, who claimed to be the Marshall of the State of Missouri. Kelly was tied hand and foot, and, without being given an opportunity to prepare for the journey, was compelled to start on the trip to Fort Madison. A fellow-minister finally persuaded the ruffians to permit him to give Kelly additional clothing. Arriving at Fort Madison, the Missourians took him to a hotel, where he was left in chains until the following morning. When prison officials promptly declared that his captors had the wrong man, Kelly was released. From February to September, his health, as a result of exposure and barbarous treatment, continued to weaken, and on the seventeenth of the latter month, he died.¹⁶

In 1849, Mark Robertson was appointed to Batesville, Missouri. After the conference adjourned, Bishop Janes received letters from Batesville, where a public meeting, presided over by a southern Methodist, had protested against the sending of another northern preacher to that charge and declared that "if they did violence must follow, and they must account for the blood shed." Robertson had moved two hundred miles to reach his appointment and determined

to stay. His first service was well advertised and he spoke to a large audience. The following morning, the court seems to have encouraged the pro-slavery element to meet. There it was decided that Robertson must quit the country at once—"peaceably if he would, forcibly if need be." When the preacher refused to move voluntarily, he was not molested during the remainder of the year. That he had many supporters at this time appears from the fact that over one hundred people joined his church in one year.¹⁷

By 1853 the pro-slavery party had increased their attacks upon Robertson. Mr. Cochran, editor of the *Batesville Eagle*, had the active support of preachers and members of the southern Methodist Church when he claimed that Robertson was an abolitionist and interested in the underground railroad, by which slaves were aided in escaping from their masters. Robertson was refused permission to correct the errors in the editor's statement. The minister revenged himself by publicly refuting the charges. Cochran threatened to whip him, but his purpose was never carried out.¹⁸ The following year, Robertson was still further persecuted. John Cole, a presiding elder of the southern Methodist Church, gave an address before three thousand people to show that the northern Church was radically anti-slavery. For three hours Robertson listened to Cole. An unsuccessful attempt was made to keep him from replying to this unjustifiable attack. The retort of Robertson to Cole's charges was that Cole had been an Englishman, had later lived in the North and finally had come to Missouri. Since he proved to be a "turncoat," Robertson claimed that it was probable that he was insincere in his statements. Although there was a distinct lack of sound argument, the people seemed to be satisfied with the reply. However, the work of the northern Church did not prosper because many members, convinced that they could not enjoy their privileges under the Constitution, migrated to new territory "or" returned to their former homes.¹⁹

Robertson had been threatened with severe punishment if he did not leave the country. In 1855, W. H. Wiley was actually run out of the country because he was a minister of the northern Methodist Church. John A. Tuggle, a member

of the southern Methodist Church, declared that Wiley had made certain statements in a private conversation relative to the situation in Kansas which marked him as an abolitionist. When two negroes escaped from their masters a short time afterwards, he was charged with being the leader of a group that urged slaves to flee from the country. He was captured by armed men, his personal effects, including his private letters, scanned for possible anti-slavery documents, and finally he was given seven days to leave the State. Wiley was told that the laws were not severe enough and that southerners had taken matters into their own hands. The result was that he removed from Missouri to free territory where his liberty of speech and action would not be curtailed.²⁰

Anthony Bewley came to Missouri from Virginia and Tennessee. In 1843 he was admitted into Missouri conference and two years later decided to remain in the northern Methodist Church. From that time forward until his tragic death he was the victim of persecution.²¹ In 1850, while living at Ebenezer, the trustees of South-western High School refused to allow his children to attend school "till a meeting of the curators and a decision be made thereon." After an interview with the teacher, temporary permission was granted to Bewley's children to receive instruction. The fact that this school was "under the supervision of the Southern Methodists" is especially significant. At one point about one hundred people signed a petition asking him not to preach in that community.²² In a doctrinal debate of 1854, Bewley was charged with being an abolitionist, which was considered by many to be conclusive evidence that not only his doctrines but his morals were unacceptable.²³

In 1860 he was appointed to work in Texas for the third year. That summer it was rumored that he and a companion had been responsible for the burning of several towns and poisoning wells.²⁴ So great was the cry against him that he decided to go to Missouri. There he was overtaken by an Arkansas mob who took him back to Fort Worth, Texas. He freely predicted that he would be hanged, whether or not he had disobeyed the law of the State. After a few hours' sleep at Fort Worth he was taken by a mob and

hanged where several negroes had previously been murdered by similar irresponsible organizations.²⁵

One author denies that northern Methodists were hanged by southern Methodists.²⁶ In so far as Methodists were members of mobs they acted on their own responsibility. While some southern Methodist papers did not sanction lynching, they did not condemn the mobs nearly as much as they did those who were murdered or driven from the slave states. But the *Texas Christian Advocate* was so extreme as to assert that there were "cases in which Lynch-law is expedient, necessary, just." Bewley was considered a lawless character who merited his fate.²⁷ With official papers of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, either supporting the murderers or else placing the blame upon the northerners, it is not strange that there should have been outrages committed in slaveholding territory.

The reaction among the people of the North may be imagined. Even the conservative Bishop Morris condemned, in unmeasured language, the murderers of Bewley.²⁸ Contrary to the Constitution of the Nation, the right of free speech and of peaceable assembly had been denied to northern Methodists, chiefly because they were not members of the recognized pro-slavery Church. By a system of intimidation, persecution, social ostracism and murder, northern Methodists had lost their fundamental rights.

1. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 43-4.

2. *Ibid.*, pp. 57-8.

3. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-6.

4. *Ibid.*, pp. 94-5.

5. *Ibid.*, pp. 149-50.

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 58-9.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 62-3.

8. *Ibid.*, pp. 63-6.

9. *Ibid.*, pp. 200-201.

10. *Ibid.*, pp. 68-71. Cf. *The Liberator*, Volume XXV., p. 149, col. 6; September 24, 1855. Said Garrison: "In view of this lynch law religious ostracism, how pertinent is the motto, 'No union with slaveholders religiously,' as well as politically."

11. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 126-32.

12. Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, pp. 227-8.

13. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, p. 142.

14. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XXIII., June 2, 1859.

15. Space permits only a few of the many accounts of outrages committed without sanction of law, and many times without any real justification, even from a pro-slavery viewpoint.

16. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 32-3.

17. *Ibid.*, p. 27.

18. *Ibid.*, p. 31.

19. Ibid., pp. 34-5.
20. Ibid., pp. 46-51.
21. Ibid., pp. 21-2.
22. Ibid., pp. 28-9.
23. Ibid., p. 34.
24. Ibid., pp. 151, 154.
25. Ibid., pp. 149-99.
26. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri*, Volume I., pp. 150 ff.
27. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, p. 189.
28. Ibid., pp. 185-7.

PART IV

LOOKING TOWARDS CIVIL WAR

CHAPTER XXI

THE COMPROMISE OF 1850

When, by means of the Compromise of 1850, Clay and Webster sought to avert the threatened division of the Nation, the Bill immediately claimed the attention of Methodist leaders of both sections. At first, the support of the Compromise was almost unanimous. While it was still being debated, the editor of *Zion's Herald* commended two of Clay's speeches.¹ The editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* wrote: "We mention with pleasure the manly, frank, independent, and patriotic course of Mr. Webster . . . we do admire his compromising spirit in this hour of peril, and mark with unbounded pleasure his love for the Union, and the boldness with which he steps forward to arrest the spirit of fanaticism, discord, and strife."²

But northern opinion rapidly changed. He who had commended Clay in February, declared in August, 1850 that "if our leading statesmen — our Clays and Websters — had boldly rebuked the culpable, insurrectionary menaces of the Southern demagogues, and magnanimously asserted the integrity of the Constitution, instead of whining and succumbing to Southern threats," the men who had threatened the Union's destruction would have been silenced.³ A month later, the same writer expressed his conviction that the day had passed "in which a politician who succumbs to the South can expect to be sustained by the people of the free States; they will send no more pro-slavery men or 'doughfaces' to Congress."⁴ Even after the death of Webster, two years later, the editor had not recovered from the shock of Webster's speech which was considered the greatest mistake of Webster's life.⁵

Matthew Simpson, editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, subjected the Compromise measure to what was probably the most searching analysis given it by any northern Methodist. The chief argument advanced in favor of Clay's proposal was that, unless such an accommodation were arranged,

the country faced disunion. But Simpson scoffed at such reasoning, and declared that there was no indication of so great a catastrophe. He believed that the pro-slavery party desired to introduce slavery into New Mexico, and that the South had raised the cry of disunion to frighten the North. He also charged that northern politicians who voted with the South were to be rewarded with important offices. Politicians had warned his paper to keep silent but Simpson replied: "Gentlemen of the political school, you may muzzle the political press if you can, *but the religious press shall be free, and for its support we shall throw ourselves upon the country.*"⁶

In October, 1850, Simpson considered what came to be the most objectionable features of the Compromise. He presented five objections to the Fugitive Slave Bill: (1) It denied trial by jury. The fugitive could not testify in his own defense, but on affidavit of the claimant, the court was authorized to give the alleged owner a certificate of ownership. (2) The writ of habeas corpus was refused. Thus a dark complexioned white man might be turned over to a slave-hunter and there was no process by which he could be recovered, even though he were proved to be a white man. (3) The law offered a direct bribe, inasmuch as the judge in each case was to receive five dollars if he declared the negro free and ten dollars if he adjudged him a slave and gave the claimant an order by which the slave might be carried back to the South. (4) The people would be required to pay for the return of fugitive slaves. For, if the owner or kidnapper made affidavit that he feared the rescue of the slave or alleged slave, the commissioner was required to employ all necessary aid to return the negro to the state from which he had fled. The expense of such aid was to be paid from the United States Treasury. It seemed reasonable to suppose that this would be the normal procedure and that the burden of expense would be borne by the public rather than by the slave's owner or kidnapper. It was intimated that the law would give employment to many "worthy" men. (5) The people were commanded to assist in the capture of those accused of being escaped slaves. If desired, even ministers could be drafted for such service on the Sabbath day, though it might interfere with a religious service.⁷

Simpson did not object to a law which would enforce the provisions of the Constitution. Said he: "If these enactments are made in a fair spirit — if they secure the free against the kidnapper, while they arrest the fugitive, we have no word to offer in opposition."⁸ But he warned Congress against going further. "If they go beyond this, a 'higher law;' disliked by some Congressmen, but dwelling in the bosoms of a Christian people, will render them comparatively nugatory."⁸ He opposed violence. Christians might suffer the consequences of disobedience to the law but not resist it. Resistance to the law meant a mob. He therefore advised a Christian "to use all moral influence to change the odious features of exceptionable laws — let him speak freely by the tongue, the press and the ballot box, *but never let him resist.*"⁹

The response to Simpson's editorials varied according to the views of his critics towards slavery. One man wrote: "How glad I am to see a man at the head of our Church paper who has the nerve to do right."¹⁰ But his arraignment of Congress was displeasing to those who supported the Bill. W. J. Brown, editor of the *State Sentinel* of Indiana, and a supporter of the Bill, spoke against the editorial which analyzed the Compromise. "We have always admired Dr. Simpson for his eloquence in the pulpit and the simplicity and beauty of his style. But divinity, not law, has been his study. We shall review his article in the spirit of Christian forbearance."¹¹

The reports from the North were sufficient to prove that the Fugitive Slave Law was unpopular among Methodists.¹² One writer declared that so extreme a measure would unite the North against slavery even as the South was united in its favor. "Demagogues and doughfaces will shrink away before the burning demands of the people of the north for the repeal of this law. The south has overacted the matter, and the demagogues of the north will be rebuked."¹³ From New England¹⁴ and Detroit¹⁵ came news of the greatest excitement as a result of the enactment. It was considered unjust, destructive of the right of trial by jury and the writ of habeas corpus, and therefore highly objectionable. In Chicago, the Methodist churches contributed modest sums, ranging from \$2.70 to \$28.00 for the purpose of aiding a certain John Freeman in his fight against being returned to the South.¹⁶

In Pennsylvania, when James Kennedy attempted to return to the South with a fugitive slave, he was murdered on the streets of Lancaster, Pennsylvania "by a mob encouraged, if not instigated, by an eminent minister of the Methodist Church."¹⁷

Simpson's statement that "a law enacting a crime is, by the force of natural reason, null and void,"¹¹ found a ready response in northern conferences. Maine conference, in 1850, resolved not to compromise with slavery in any way whatsoever.¹⁸ The following year they declared that they owed obedience to God first of all, and that the Fugitive Slave Law, being contrary to the law of God, did not merit their support.¹⁹ Three years later they urged the repeal of the law;²⁰ and in 1855 they again pledged themselves to seek its removal from the statute books of the nation, since they considered it "an unrighteous usurpation of authority, unauthorized by the Constitution of the United States and contrary to the word of God and the precepts of Christianity."²¹

Vermont conference condemned the law and those responsible for it. They claimed to be good citizens but affirmed that when the laws of the land were contrary to the law of God, they would resist any attempt to coerce them.²² East Maine conference declared with emphasis: "That as Ministers of Christ, we will never relax our efforts in behalf of the oppressed — WE WILL NEVER BE SILENT SPECTATORS OF THEIR WRONGS AND SUFFERINGS, and by the grace of God, WE WILL NEVER LEAVE OUR MASTER'S WORK TO HUNT DOWN THE WEARY AND TOIL-WORN STRANGER WITHIN OUR GATES, NOR IN ANY WAY ASSIST OR COUNTENANCE HIS RETURN TO HOPELESS BONDAGE."²³ Other conferences took similar action;²⁴ in fact, within the writer's knowledge, there was no dissenting voice in the chorus of denunciation which continually increased in northern conferences.

There can be no question that northern Methodists hoped to destroy the force of the Fugitive Slave Law. The editor of *Zion's Herald* wrote: "We hope that from the outset this enormous statute will be found a nullity—dead letter, doubly dead and buried beneath the curses of a free and Christian people. So shall we treat it, and we shall teach men so."²⁵

The Rev. Mr. Robie, editor of the Buffalo *Christian Advocate*, agreed: "We can only regard this law, passed by the late Congress, as one of the most accursed offsprings of one of the most depraved bodies that ever met to legislate for the destinies of the nation . . . we sustain the 'higher law', and abominate such legislation without apology."²⁶ With such advice coming from men in places of influence it is not surprising that there should be resistance to the law. Northern Methodists refused, as did those in the South, to obey a law which was obnoxious to them.

While northern Methodists condemned unsparingly the enactment of Congress, those in the South supported it. By the editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* it was considered "a wise and just provision for giving efficiency to an article of the Constitution of the United States." It was held that the legislators never anticipated the effect it would have in the north. "It works well in catching slaves,—but it has made a great many fugitives from sanity. Insane ravings against it are almost as common as the subjects whose wanderings it was intended to prevent."²⁷ Again, the same writer believed that the law was very conservative and perhaps "the only link in the golden chain which binds our National Confederacy in glorious union. If this last link be broken, our Federal Union will crumble in ruins."²⁸

Two groups in the North were the targets of southern Methodists. Theodore Parker had condemned the city of Boston for permitting Simms, a fugitive slave, to be taken back to slavery. Herod, Nero, Dominic, Torquemada, George Jeffries — none of these was considered as foul as those who, for ten dollars, were willing to deprive a human being of his freedom.²⁹ But Parker was not the only master of bitter invective. For the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* denounced the great abolitionist for his extreme condemnation of the craven spirit of Boston officials. In part he said: "It is said that there is a difference and a choice in spoiled eggs; if so, we think we have found about the worst one in the nest, in the following which we take from an Eastern paper. If abolitionism itself can stand such a nauseous dose of furious treason without vomiting forth the guilty author it must be possessed of the stomach of a hyena. Begotten of ignorance upon the body of hypocrisy,

fanaticism, blind and BLACK, starts forth, at whose polluted shrine Parker, Garrison & Co. are the high priesthood. A noble band, truly, and as innocent, faithful, and worthy as their great prototypes, Benedict Arnold and Judas Iscariot. Such men ought to be elevated, lifted up high in the world, that they may receive their deserts; the elevation of Haman would not be a too lofty one upon which to exhibit them to their admiring countrymen; but alas! virtue like to theirs does not always meet its reward in this bad world, especially in the North. — In the South they might stand a better chance.”³⁰

The second group was composed of northern Methodist editors. Writing of these men, and especially of the editor of *Zion's Herald*, the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* declared: “These men are guilty of treason.”³¹ The same writer, after printing many expressions on the Fugitive Slave Law from northern papers, which counseled disobedience of the law, said that his only purpose was to inform the South so that they would “know how their rights are regarded at the north, and what kind of appeals are made to the religious community by these saintly editors and writers, whose Bible and Discipline teach them ‘to be subject to the powers that be.’ If these men can influence a majority at the north, our days as a confederated republic are numbered.”³²

The fact that northern Methodists were disobedient to the law of the land was especially noted by southern Methodist editors. An editorial in the *St. Louis Christian Advocate* denounced the interference of the northern press with the enforcement of the law and concluded: “Let then the sentiment be as immovable as the eternal granite of the Rocky mountains, *that law must be and shall be preserved*. Let the bold and reckless nullifiers of law and disorganizers of government understand that the government has resources which it can and will bring into requisition, if needful, for the protection of its citizens.”³³ The decision of northern Methodists to obey the “higher law” was also bitterly censured. One editor wrote: “Who made them judges in this matter? Who clothed red-mouthed fanaticism in the habiliments of the ‘woolsack’, and mounted the high headed monster upon the ‘higher’ bench of a spiritual judiciary there, with the tolerance of the Inquisition, to arraign before it and sit in judgment

upon the peace-promoting laws of the land?—those same laws too, under whose kind protection, unfortunately, that foul demon, which inspires them, is allowed to live . . . We look upon the unfortunate Benedict Arnold as a generous and noble gentlemen compared with some of the more modern traitors.”³⁴

The Compromise of 1850 increased the ill-feeling between the two Methodist Churches. We have seen that southerners did not propose to obey a law which they considered contrary to their interests. Neither life nor property of northerners was safe in slaveholding states. But southerners might protest that they had only followed the example of northerners in disobedience to the law. For, before southerners committed their most serious crimes against northern Methodist preachers, northern Methodists had refused to obey the Fugitive Slave Law and thus placed themselves, legally at least, on the same plane as those they later condemned for outrages committed in southern territory. Not law, but passion, mob spirit, and the “higher law” were supreme.

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1. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXI., p. 30, col. 1; February 20, 1850.
 2. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XIV., No. 22; March 29, 1850.
 3. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXI., p. 126, col. 1; August 7, 1850.
 4. *Ibid.*, p. 146, col. 1; September 11, 1850.
 5. *Ibid.*, Volume XXIII., p. 174, col. 2; November 3, 1852.
 6. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, pp. 262-5.
 7. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XVII., p. 162, col. 3; October 9, 1850.
 8. *Ibid.*, p. 154, col. 3; September 25, 1850.
 9. *Ibid.*, p. 182, col. 3; November 14, 1850.
 10. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 265.
 11. *Ibid.*, p. 267.
 12. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXI., p. 166, col. 1; October 16, 1850.
 13. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XVII., p. 170, col. 3; October 23, 1850.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 174, col. 4; October 31, 1850.
 15. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXI., p. 170, col. 1; October 23, 1850.
 16. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume II., p. 39, col. 3; March 8, 1854.
 17. Tyler, *Memoir of Roger B. Taney*, p. 131.
 18. *Minutes of the Maine Conference*, p. 12.
 19. *Ibid.*, 1851, p. 12.
 20. *Ibid.*, 1854, pp. 11-12.
 21. *Ibid.*, 1855, p. 12.
 22. *Minutes of the Vermont Conference*, 1851, pp. 17-18.
 23. *Minutes of the East Maine Conference*, 1852, pp. 22-3.
 24. These conferences were Erie, North Indiana and Wisconsin.

25. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXI., p. 154, col. 1; September 25, 1850.
26. *Nashville Christian Advocate*, Volume XIV., No. 52; October 25, 1850.
27. *Richmond Christian Advocate*, Volume IV (New Series), p. 170, col. 3; October 24, 1850.
28. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXI., p. 190, col. 3; November 27, 1850.

29. Bartlett, *Modern Agitators*, pp. 33-5. The passage from Parker's speech is as follows: "Where shall I find a parallel with men who will do such a deed—do it in Boston? I will open the tombs and bring up the most hideous tyrants from the dead. Come, brood of monsters, let me bring you up from the deep damnation of the graves wherein your hated memories continue for all time their never ending rot. Come, birds of evil omen! come, ravens, vultures, carrion crows, and see the spectacle! come, see the meet- of congenial souls! I will disturb, disquiet, and bring up the greatest monsters of the human race! Tremble not, women; tremble not, children, tremble not, men! They are all dead! They cannot harm you now! Fear the living, not the dead!"

"Come hither, Herod, the wicked. Thou that didst seek after that young child's life, and destroyedst the innocents! Let me look on thy face! No, go! Thou wert a heathen! Go, lie with the innocents thou hast massacred. Thou art too good for this company!"

"Come, Nero! thou awful Roman emperor, come up! No, thou wast drunk with power, schooled in Roman depravity. Thou hadst, besides, the example of thy fancied gods. Go, wait another day. I will seek a worsen man."

"Come hither, St. Dominic! come Torquemada!—fathers of the Inquisition! merciless monsters, seek your equal here. No; pass by. You are no companions for such men as these. You were the servants of atheistic popes, of cruel kings. Go to, and get you gone. Another time I may have work for you,—now lie there, and persevere to rot. You are not yet quite wicked and corrupt enough for this comparison. Go, get you gone, lest the sun turn back at sight of ye!"

"Come up, thou heap of wickedness, George Jeffries! thy hands deep purple with the blood of thy murdered fellow-men. Ah! I know thee, awful and accursed shade! Two hundred years after thy death, men hate thee still, not without cause. Look men upon thee! I know thy history. Pause and be still while I tell it to these men . . . Come, shade of a judicial butcher. Two hundred years, thy name has been pilloried in the face of the world, and thy memory gibbeted before mankind. Let us see how thou wilt compare with those who kidnap men in Boston. Go, seek companionship with them. Go, claim thy kindred, if such they be. Go, tell them that the memory of the wicked shall rot; that there is a God; and eternity; ay, and a judgment, too, where the slave may appeal against him that made him a slave, to Him that made him a man."

"What! Dost thou shudder? Thou turn back! These not thy kindred! Why dost thou turn pale, as when the crowd clutches at thy life in a London street? It is true, George Jeffries and these are not thy kin. Forgive me that I should send thee, on such an errand, or bid thee seek companionship with such—with Boston hunters of the slave! Thou wert not base enough! It was a great bribe that tempted thee! Again, I say, pardon me for sending thee to keep company with such men! Thou only struckest at men accused of crime; not men accused only of their birth! Thou wouldst not send a man into bondage for two pounds! I will not rank thee with men, who, in Boston, for ten dollars, would enslave a negro now! Rest still, Herod! Be quiet Nero! Sleep St. Dominic, and sleep, O Torquemada, in your fiery jail!"

Sleep, Jeffries, underneath 'the altar of the church' which seeks, with christian charity, to hide your hated bones!"

30. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XV., No. 19; May 15, 1851.
31. Ibid., Volume XIV., No. 53; November 1, 1850.
32. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XVII., p. 178, cols. 6-7; November 6, 1850.
33. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXI., p. 198, col. 5; December 11, 1850.
34. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XV., July 17, 1851.

CHAPTER XXII

FIRST STEPS TOWARDS CIVIL WAR

The publication of Harriett Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" stirred the wrath of southern Methodist editors. Those of the *Advocates* at Memphis and Nashville believed that the rights and privileges of such authors as Mrs. Stowe should be taken away.¹ Lee, editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate*, asserted that "the whole work, from inception to completion, from the press to the theater, 'is just like the devil.' It ain't like anything else, that we wot of."²

When Stephen A. Douglas introduced his bill in January, 1854, erecting the Kansas-Nebraska territory, Chase and Sumner and other Free-soilers in the House and Senate published a protest against the bill and its author. By the populace, Douglas was compared to Benedict Arnold and burned in effigy throughout the North "by thousands who never took the trouble to read the Kansas-Nebraska Bill or seriously contemplated its effects."³ As a part of this denunciation, three thousand fifty ministers of New England, of all denominations, protested against the passage of the bill.⁴ Douglas immediately took offense at this action and bitterly condemned the ministers, charging them "with 'HAVING PROSTITUTED THE SACRED DESK to the miserable and corrupting influence of party politics;,' and he asserted that they 'ought to be rebuked and required to confine themselves to their vocation, instead of neglecting their holy religion.'"⁵

The reaction of Methodists was such as might be expected. New England ministers were upheld and Douglas was severely criticised by two northern editors.⁶ In the South, the reverse was true. The rebuke administered by Douglas and other senators to northern radicals was highly commended. Southern Methodists put the greatest emphasis upon the effect which the action of New England clergymen

would have upon Christianity. The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* affirmed: "This is a sad affair, not only for the country, but for Christianity, so shamefully outraged in 'the house of its friends.' Professionally, we cannot be supposed to feel indifferently towards the ministerial character. When in their place, engaged in their appropriate work, no class of men in the country is more highly esteemed than ministers of the gospel. But when they turn aside from their holy employments, and descend into the arena of party political strife, they defile their mission, and lay their honor in the dust. Instead of 'washing their hands in innocency,' they soil them with worldly filth, and stain them with crime against their country's peace. They richly merit the rebukes administered by the gentlemen of the Senate, and must blame themselves, if, hereafter, they find themselves shunned as disturbers of the public peace, and the religion they profess and teach suspected of having too much to do with the world that now is, and too little with that which is to come."⁷

As in 1850, so now northern conferences rallied to the anti-slavery side of the question. By Maine conference, the Nebraska Bill was called a "wicked act, in as much as it is a violation of the word of God, a violation of a solemn compact, a forfeiture of national confidence, and an insult to the moral sentiment of a free people." They declared their belief that members of Congress from New England who supported Douglas 'were actuated by motives absolutely corrupt' and that they were therefore "unworthy the confidence of the New England people." They urged that all such should be defeated for re-election.⁸ Members of Providence conference maintained that the fact that they were ministers did not absolve them from their duties as citizens; against the passage of the bill they protested because it would create distrust between the two sections, and because it was proposed to make slavery a national rather than a state question.⁹ Erie conference also considered the law dangerous to the union of the states,¹⁰ while conferences of the "Old Northwest" passed various resolutions in which they protested against the further extension of slavery and asked the people to petition Congress to repeal the act. Some declared that they would vote against any man for public

office who was not definitely pledged against the further extension of the slave power.¹¹

It may be taken as axiomatic that whatever the North disliked the South approved. A northern editor asserted that "none of the Southern Methodist papers have done anything but wink favorably at the Nebraska bill as proposed and urged by Mr. Douglas."¹² It is doubtless true that southern Methodists were in complete sympathy with the Douglas program but they said comparatively little on the merits of the subject, maintaining that the Nebraska Bill was a political measure and therefore one on which the Church had no right to express itself.¹³

By the terms of the Douglas bill the question of slavery or freedom in Kansas was to be decided by the people of the territory itself. That the southern Methodist Church was keenly interested in the outcome is evident. One southerner urged the southern Church to enter the lists in Kansas against northern Methodists.¹⁴ A correspondent of the *Texas Christian Advocate* declared that "southern men, southern organizations, southern colonization, and Southern Churches" would occupy Kansas. He believed that the South should have the entire territory in spite of northern protests. "Their disregard of southern rights and southern feelings, their insincerity and dishonesty, and their treason to the Constitution of the Union, place them utterly beyond the pale of our respect. Let the whole south, and the entire southern Church, direct their eyes and their energies to Kansas—aye, and to Nebraska also. Let these troublers of Church and state be defeated and overwhelmed, 'horse, foot, and dragons.'" ¹⁵

In 1857, the *Texas Christian Advocate* made a further appeal. The editor said it had been demonstrated that slave labor could be used as well in Kansas as in any other southern territory. He urged that if "a steady tide of emigration is kept up from the South, it will yet be free from abolition domination." He cited several authorities to show that colonies had already gone, while others were preparing to go to Kansas. One Captain Clayton was especially commended and the editor added: "Other patriotic citizens from other portions of the South will doubtless follow his example, and

Western Missouri will literally empty her population upon the territory.”¹⁶

March 14, 1855 Andrew Monroe of the southern Church wrote a letter to the *Nashville Christian Advocate*, in which he urged the South to establish herself in Kansas and besought the Church to “lay deep and wide the foundations of Southern Methodism.” He commented upon the promising future of Kansas but he also issued a warning. “Kansas is the most vulnerable and exposed part of our entire Methodist territory. The south generally, and the Church in particular, has much to win or lose in the present contest. We hope to see thousands of families here from slaveholding states before six months shall pass. Our bishops, presiding elders, preachers, and people ought to know that this country will be settled, and furnished with preachers and institutions. If we do not do it, others will. May we not hope for prompt and efficient action on the part of the south, till the men and the vast wealth of the south be called into requisition?”¹⁷

The plans of the South for southern churches and southern institutions in Kansas were denounced in scathing language by the editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*. He said it appeared that “to propagate the patriarchial system was of more importance than to spread the Gospel itself. Earth and perdition it seems are to be moved, in order to have the ‘peculiar institution’ planted in Kansas.”¹⁷ Later he charged that “the Southern press” were “at all times more eager to defend slavery and to denounce anti-slavery men than they” were “to denounce licentiousness and concubinage.”¹⁸

After Sumner delivered his speech, “The Crime against Kansas,” May 19, 1856, anti-slavery sentiment in the North and pro-slavery sentiment in the South became more intense. Lee accused northern Methodist preachers of being leaders in the anti-slavery agitation; and affirmed that they were neglecting their regular work and turning to politics—that “slavery, Kansas, Sumner, *et id omne genus*, are the themes on which the pulpit has been sweltering for some time past.”¹⁹ A survey of the resolutions of northern conferences

indicates that there was probably little exaggeration in the statement of the southern editor.

East Genesee conference condemned unsparingly the practices in Kansas and called upon the Government to protect free-soilers. They also condemned the existence of "recrimination, of bullying and black-guardism" in Congress.²⁰ Genesee conference determined to use their influence in every possible way, and especially at the ballot-box, against slavery extension, which was considered the important question in the election of 1856.²¹ Maine conference declared that the work of southern "ruffians" in Kansas and in Congress was "not only an assault upon the foundations of civil and religious liberty, but an insult to the American people which demands the utter prostration, by constitutional means, of the slave power, as the only method of preserving our self respect and of showing ourselves worthy to be a free and independent people."²²

Conferences of the "Old Northwest" were equally strong in their denunciation of slavery and the slave power in Kansas and in Congress. Michigan conference encouraged Methodists in Kansas and deplored the fact that "pro-slavery ruffians" had "been allowed to invade the Territory of Kansas, to shoot down and drive out free State men, with a view to prostitute its virgin soil to the foul purposes of slavery."²³ Rock River conference condemned the Administration for the outrages in Kansas, and also "the spirit of crimination bullying and blackguardism as it unfortunately existed in the Halls of Congress of the United States." They declared that the attack on Sumner merited the condemnation of "all honorable and upright men."²⁴

Bishop Pierce predicted that the South would lose the struggle for the control of Kansas. While he blamed the North for being the aggressors in the outrages in the territory, he admitted that the South had followed the bad example set by the North. In his opinion the South had erred in two respects. First, they had sent soldiers instead of citizens, and the permanency of southern society was, therefore, continually threatened. Second, southerners had undertaken the punishment of "abolition knights," instead of turning them over to the National Government. While

the climate was considered unfavorable for slavery, he hoped the institution might be recognized in the Constitution of the State when it was admitted into the Union so as "to identify Kansas with the Southern States in the councils of the country." But he concluded that Kansas would be lost to the South "by her own fault rather than by the contrivance of her enemies."²⁵

It was on March 6, 1857 that the Supreme Court of the United States delivered their momentous decision in the case of Dred Scott. The South was more than satisfied with the result, and, while there is little evidence on the point, there is no reason to believe that southern Methodists were not in accord with popular sentiment. But in the North, there seemed to be few dissenting voices in the chorus of denunciation with which the majority of Methodist leaders greeted the Court's decision. The opinion of Justice Curtis that he did not consider the decision of the Court binding because it embraced points which were beyond its jurisdiction, gave Methodists sufficient opportunity to express their utter disapproval of the disposition of the case.

Maine conference regretted the effect which the decision would have upon the negroes of the country, and said that, while they did "not pass judgment upon its legal correctness," they believed that "the slave power produced that decision."²⁶ New Hampshire conference refused to accept the decision because it was contrary to the Constitution, justice and religion.²⁷ Pittsburg conference declared that they had always considered slavery local and therefore beyond their control; now the Supreme Court had made slavery a national question, and consequently proper for discussion.²⁸ Other conferences of the Northeast and West were equally severe in their censure of the Court.²⁹

The three topics considered in this chapter helped to bring about the Civil War. "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was propaganda that succeeded in increasing the bitterness between the sections; the Kansas-Nebraska Bill re-opened a question which was supposed to have been settled in 1850; while the Dred Scott decision further increased sectionalism and the hostility of northerners and southerners for each other. On all these questions Methodist leaders expressed themselves, and aided

in creating sentiment for or against the political leaders in the great controversy over slavery.

1. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XX., p. 18, col. 7; February 2, 1853 and *Ibid.*, p. 23, col. 1; February 9, 1853.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 6, col. 6; January 12, 1853.
3. Dodd, *Expansion and Conflict*, pp. 235-40.
4. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri*, Volume I., p. 174. Cf. *The Liberator*, Volume XXIV., p. 43, col. 3; March 17, 1854.
5. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXV., p. 58, col. 3; April 12, 1854.
6. Those of *Zion's Herald* and the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*. For the latter see Volume II., p. 63, col. 2; April 19, 1854 and *Ibid.*, p. 66, col. 2; April 26, 1854.
7. *The Liberator*, Volume XXIV., p. 65, col. 2; April 28, 1854.
8. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1854, pp. 11-12.
9. Minutes of the Providence Conference, 1854, p. 24.
10. Fradenburgh, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II., pp. 517-18. The vote on the resolutions was unanimous.
11. Bennett, *History of Methodism in Wisconsin*, p. 147; Herrick and Sweet, *History of the North Indiana Conference*, p. 47; *The Liberator*, Volume XXIV., p. 57, col. 4; April 14, 1854 and *Ibid.*, p. 169, cols. 5-6; October 27, 1854. See also, *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume II., p. 70, col. 3; May 3, 1854.
12. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XXI., p. 38, col. 7; March 8, 1854.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 43, col. 2; March 15, 1854.
14. *The Liberator*, Volume XXV., p. 73, cols. 1-2; May 11, 1855.
15. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XXII., p. 110, col. 7; July 11, 1855.
16. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, p. 93.
17. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XXII., p. 66, col. 6; April 25, 1855.
18. *Ibid.*, p. 110, col. 7; July 11, 1855.
19. *Ibid.*, Volume XXIII., p. 174, col. 2; October 29, 1856.
20. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IV., p. 150, col. 7; September 17, 1856.
21. Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1856, p. 25.
22. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1856, p. 10.
23. Minutes of the Michigan Conference, 1856, p. 26.
24. Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1856, pp. 22-3. These resolutions were, in substance, the same as those adopted by Troy, Black River, Oneida and Wyoming conferences.
25. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, p. 96.
26. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1857, p. 10.
27. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1857, p. 28.
28. Minutes of the Pittsburg Conference, 1857, pp. 24-5.
29. For the action of other conferences see: Minutes of the East Maine Conference, 1858, p. 20; Minutes of the Vermont Conference, 1857, p. 15; Minutes of the New England Conference, 1857, p. 26; Minutes of the Upper Iowa Conference, 1857, p. 32; and Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1857, pp. 22-3. One paragraph of the latter resolutions was copied verbatim from the New England conference resolutions without proper credit.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE EVE OF CIVIL WAR

In the last two years before the outbreak of the Civil War there were three subjects of importance.¹ On the re-opening of the African slave trade the two Methodist Churches seem to have been of one mind. New England conference condemned "the desperate and persistent efforts" to import slaves into the country.² In the South, the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* cited with approval the statement of Justice John A. Campbell of the United States Supreme Court at the Commencement of the University of Alabama that the African slave trade was the "supreme unrighteousness."³ He also commended the address of Hon. H. W. Hilliard at the Commencement of the University of Virginia, in which he said it was "better for Holland to cut the dykes that keep out the sea than for our country to open her doors to this importation of barbarism." The editor declared that "such applause greeted the sentiment as even that place and audience were not used to."³ The same writer said that there were a few in the South and some in the North who desired a law admitting slaves but that these did not express the real sentiment of either section.³

The second event which stirred both sections of the country to a high pitch of excitement was the capture of Harper's Ferry by John Brown and his attempt to organize a slave insurrection.⁴ As might be expected, the exploit of Brown received only condemnation from southern papers. Under the heading, "Riot at Harper's Ferry," the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* printed some of the press comment on the insurrection.⁵ A week later, he declared that it was a "foolish and wicked attempt on the part of a few fanatics to accomplish an impossibility" and that he did not anticipate that the "outrage" would have the sanction of many people in the North.⁶ The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* considered the raid at Harper's Ferry a warning to the

South. "Abolitionism is a form of treason daily acquiring new strength and new courage. LIBERTY trembles at its progress. Patriotism, uniting north and south, can alone arrest its progress, and a wise Providence must guide . . . Let the entire south learn from the easy capture of Harper's Ferry, the stern necessity of protection, as far as the national and state constitutions will allow, and our own resources will justify, against all contingencies and probabilities, from abolitionism in Church and state, in future."⁷

John Brown and his raid were scarcely more popular among northern Methodist editors. The *Western Christian Advocate* first gave an account of the "riot" simply as a news item.⁸ A week later the editor asserted that Brown's exploit was "one of the most insane and foolhardy things" he had ever known, and decried the attempt to make political capital out of it, as it was claimed the *Nashville Christian Advocate* had done by saying it was a part of the "abolition and Black Republican schemes." "If the editor of that paper really thinks that the Republican party sympathize with the crazy schemes of Brown any more than the Democratic party do, he is to be pitied for his ignorance; if he does not think so, he is to be pitied for something worse than ignorance."⁹

Watson condemned the raid of Brown because of the evils that would come upon the slaves, and because anti-slavery men were placed in an embarrassing position. In his opinion, Brown had used the wrong methods to accomplish the destruction of slavery. "We are citizens, and our laws reflect our will. If we like them not, we have but to breathe upon them and they are gone. Our remedy is at the ballot-box—not the cartridge-box. We have no apology for rebellion and invasion." Servile war was considered the worst of all evils, and no one who claimed "to be either a friend to the slave or a true man" would aid such a movement.¹⁰ He excused Brown by saying that he believed that, because he had lost a son and some property by the raids of the pro-slavery party, he had sought retaliation as a result of an unbalanced mind. "The whole affair seems the work of a madman."¹¹

By the latter part of November, Watson seemed less concerned about the treasonable character of Brown's act. He recorded that there was a great excitement in Virginia,¹²

especially at Charlestown, Alexandria and Richmond, because the people feared that Brown's friends were about to attempt his rescue. Troops had been ordered to Harper's Ferry from Washington.¹³ He seems almost to chuckle at the excitable state of the Virginia mind. A gun was discharged by a soldier and Charlestown thrown into a panic, which was quieted only when it was discovered that it was only a cow which had refused to obey the sentry's order to give the countersign.¹⁴

It remained for *Zion's Herald* to stir the Methodist press of the South. The editor declared that Harper's Ferry had "caused a perfect panic in the South."¹⁵ It was stated that the fires in Charlestown, started by unknown persons, had been credited to the friends of Brown and that the military power in Virginia had been increased as a result.¹⁶ All trains were searched for armed men who might be coming to the aid of Brown.¹⁷

The attention which this New England paper paid to the insurrection called forth the condemnation of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate*. Under the heading, "Zion's Herald Giggles Over Harper's Ferry," the southern paper refuted the statement of the prevalence of a panic in the South. "A more deliberate, unfounded, profitless, pointless, pitiful falsehood, was never perpetrated." He admitted that there was excitement in Virginia but nothing more than would be occasioned by "a fatal steamboat or railroad disaster." The panic attributed to the South was entirely lacking and the statement of the northern editor declared to be without foundation. The southerner's comparison of the editor of *Zion's Herald* and Gerrit Smith and Brown is not complimentary to the first named. "The only difference between the editor of *Zion's Herald* and Gerrit Smith is a difference in outspoken honesty and pluck. 'Ossawatamie Brown' is a saint, compared to those orators, preachers and editors, secular and religious, who have purposely fomented such hideous incendiaryisms and villany, and secretly longed to see it successful, but are ready to condemn it *if it fail!* Poor Brown will hang, but his neck is no more richly claimed by the halter than many a one now encircled by a white cravat."¹⁸

Brown impressed all who met him, whether friend or enemy, as a man of purpose. A Methodist preacher argued

with him in his cell about slavery as "a Christian institution," but Brown replied that, while he was willing to consider the clergyman a gentleman it was "as a *heathen* gentleman."¹⁹ One editor declared that John Brown "convinces all who approach him, that he possesses an original nobility of soul which is to be found in very few individuals."²⁰ After his execution, Watson came to a fuller appreciation of Brown. "John Brown is dead, but the spirit of his deeds walks among the Southern plantations! John Brown is dead, but his death made him in the estimation of thousands a martyr to freedom!"²¹

It was in connection with the raid on Harper's Ferry that the editor of *Zion's Herald* wrote: "There is no evidence that previous to 1854, only five years ago, John Brown was any stronger in his abolition tendencies than three-fourths of all the men and women and children north of Mason & Dixon's line. John Brown has done no more than each one of a million of men in our Free States would have done under similar provocation, if they had had the pluck to do it."²² Pluck John Brown undoubtedly had, by testimony of friend and enemy. But if the *New York Observer* may be believed, it must be admitted that the ministers of New York were not grasping for the martyr's crown. The editor affirms that "of the *five hundred* pulpits of this city, we believe that not five uttered a word of approbation of the John Brown invasion of Virginia . . .

"Of the five hundred preachers in this city, we have heard of but TWO who ventured to give the sanction of their pulpits to the support of the highest crime perpetrated in this country since the treason of Benedict Arnold."²³

That not all Methodists in the North were opposed to Brown's raid is evident from the evidence already presented. *Zion's Herald* was a very strong supporter of Brown. And Gilbert Haven, sensing the meaning of Brown's act, said on the day he was hanged: "Ere long slavery will lose Waterloo. *Within this first century of our national life it will disappear. Then will all men unite in praising this Samson who first tore down the pillars of this soul-devouring Dagon.*"²⁴ But those who spoke out boldly in condemnation of Brown were few indeed. Consistency compelled northerners to support the Constitution and the Government against

attacks, even as they were insisting that northern preachers should be protected in their right of free speech and the right of assembly when they went into southern territory.

The election of 1860 was one of the most important in the history of our country, yet Methodist papers returned to the time-honored position of non-interference in politics. There is no indication that northern Methodists, as such, approved the principles set forth by Lincoln in his debates with Douglas or that they favored him as the Republican presidential candidate. In view of the fact that probably two-thirds of the delegates to the Republican Convention at Chicago preferred Seward and that Lincoln was not favorably known to many in the party,²⁵ it is not strange that Methodists should have been deprived of the seer's vision as to the real greatness of the new Republican leader. Northern papers gave some indication of the general feeling in the South but nothing more. Mr. Rett of South Carolina was reported to have declared that Lincoln was a "renegade Southerner" and Mr. Hamline a mulatto.²⁶ Colonel Keitt of Columbia, South Carolina, declared that he was for disunion if Lincoln were elected.²⁷ But a more moderate southern paper was quoted as saying: "All who are in favor of civil war, starvation, ruin, desolation, robbery, arson, murder, and the utter destruction of the South, should go for disunion if Lincoln is elected."²⁸

Southern Methodist papers freely predicted that Lincoln would be elected and that secession and civil war would result.²⁹ The conviction that Lincoln's election meant the destruction of slavery was shared by at least one Methodist abolitionist, who made the prediction immediately after the triumph of Lincoln.³⁰ Dr. Kingsley, editor of the *Western Christian Advocate*, asserted that the election of the Republican candidate did not mean the destruction of slavery. In reply, the editor of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* declared: "Dr. Kingsley knows perfectly well that he is simply practicing a deception of the deepest kind upon the Southern people. He knows perfectly well that the ultimate destruction of the institutions of the South is the one aim of the Republican party, and the success of Mr. Lincoln gives them power to accomplish it, gradually but surely. He knows perfectly well that he does not represent the prevalent feel-

ing of the Northern people. But the South can not be deceived any longer. And she will choose destruction rather than submission to dishonor and gradual subjugation: and she will choose rightly. The Western, itself, is filled with hatred, abuse, and misrepresentation of the South. The coaxing game is hypocritical, contemptible, and happily comes too late."³¹

The election of Lincoln caused the greatest excitement throughout the country and especially in the South, where the states began to adopt their ordinances of secession.³² In this section there was the greatest interest in the incoming administration. Predictions as to the personnel of the new Cabinet were freely made but proved to without basis in fact.³³ As an abolition state paper Lincoln's inaugural address must have been a severe disappointment. But to conservatives of both sections it brought the promise that there would be no war unless it was forced upon the Government. Stevenson testified: "His inaugural is as good and as favorable to the South, it seems to me, as could reasonably be expected."³⁴ And Stephen A. Douglas gave his approval to Lincoln's position on the question of secession.³⁵

Three topics — the re-opening of the African slave trade, John Brown's raid and the installation of Abraham Lincoln as president — have been considered in the present chapter. On the first, Methodists of the North and the South seem to have been agreed, although it is improbable that those in the South would have brought in a verdict of "guilty" in a trial of smugglers who unloaded their human freight at southern wharves. Until after the execution of John Brown, official Methodist papers of both sections condemned Brown and his unlawful attempt to free the slaves. Only *Zion's Herald*, which was not responsible to the General Conference but only to the radical, abolition conferences of New England, seems to have stirred the South to wrath and indignation. And in one of the greatest crises in the history of the Nation, northern Methodist papers, conferences and bishops gave no indication that they believed that Lincoln's principles should be sustained at the ballot-box, much less that he was the man of destiny, called of God to be the preserver of the Union and the liberator of a race.

1. The Lincoln-Douglas debates are not considered because there was no comment by any Methodist paper on these debates until 1861. From the Methodist press one would never have known that the debates occurred.
2. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1859, p. 19.
3. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXIII., September 1, 1859. "The truth is, those who favor the re-opening of the African slave-trade are about equally divided between the North and the South and too few in either section to awaken serious reply or opposition. Hence all the saying and writing has been pretty much on one side. The people of the North must not be held accountable for the acts of ship owners in New York and Massachusetts, who it appears from recent developments, are actively engaged in fitting out vessels designed for this traffic. Nor must those of the South be held accountable for those smuggling speculators on the gulf coast who are ready to receive these cargoes."
- It should not be forgotten that the General Conference of the Church, South, in 1858 refused to take any stand on the African slave trade. The probability is that little opposition would have been raised to such traffic by southern Methodists.
4. "Ossawatimie Brown" had first gained notoriety in 1856 when he murdered five pro-slavery men in Kansas in retaliation for the murder of free state men. (Smith, Parties and Slavery, p. 165). In May, 1858, he led a band of men who freed eleven negroes and stole some horses in Missouri. The negroes were taken to Canada and the horses sold in Cleveland, Ohio. In the process of taking this property, one slaveholder was killed. (Chadwick, Causes of the Civil War, pp. 76-7). In July, 1859, Brown and twenty-one followers came to the vicinity of Harper's Ferry. The secretary of war was perfectly familiar with the plans of Brown but did nothing. On the evening of Sunday, October 16, Harper's Ferry was occupied by Brown and his men; the following Tuesday morning, the engine-house was assaulted and Brown and some of his men were captured. Owen Brown and six others made their escape. (Chadwick, Causes of the Civil War, pp. 77-81.)
5. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXIII., October 27, 1859.
6. Ibid., November 3, 1859.
7. Quoted in the Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXVI., p. 178, col. 6; November 9, 1859.
8. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXVI., p. 170, col. 4; October 26, 1859.
9. Ibid., p. 174, col. 4; November 2, 1859.
10. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VII., p. 195, col. 3; December 7, 1859.
11. Ibid., p. 171, col. 3; October 26, 1859.
12. Ibid., p. 183, col. 3; November 16, 1859.
13. Ibid., p. 187, col. 3; November 23, 1859.
14. Ibid., p. 191, col. 3; November 30, 1859.
15. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXX., p. 171, col. 1; October 26, 1859.
16. Ibid., p. 187, col. 2; November 23, 1859.
17. Ibid., p. 191, col. 2; November 30, 1859.
18. Ibid., p. 182, col. 5; Nov. 16, 1859. In reply, the editor of *Zion's Herald* said: "We have seen drunken men stoutly maintain they were sober, and shall not forget one poor little man shaking with the ague, who with teeth chattering and chin trembling, squeaked out, 'I don't-shake-much-now.' As to the comparative saintship of Brown and Zion's Herald, that is not a matter for us to decide, though we certainly would rather take his chance for heaven hanging, than the above Editor's, or any unhung and unrepentant oppressor of God's poor."
19. Sanborn, Life and Letters of John Brown, p. 618.
20. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXX., p. 179, col. 1; November 9, 1859.

21. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume VII., p. 195, col. 3; December 7, 1859.
22. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXX., p. 194, col. 3; December 7, 1859.
23. Quoted in The Liberator, Volume XXIX., p. 193, col. 1; December 9, 1859.
24. Methodist Quarterly Review, Volume LII., p. 191; April, 1870. It is possible that Haven had thoughts in 1870 of what happened in 1859 that he did not have in 1859.
25. Chadwick, Causes of the Civil War, pp. 119-23.
26. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXXI., p. 119, col. 1; July 25, 1860.
27. Ibid., p. 147, col. 2; September 12, 1860.
28. Ibid., p. 179, col. 2; November 7, 1860.
29. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 224-5.
30. Methodist Quarterly Review, Volume XXIV., December 6, 1860. This was Gilbert Haven.
31. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXVIII., p. 84, col. 4; March 13, 1861.
32. Stevenson, Journal, Volume I., pp. 171-2.
33. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., December 6, 1860
34. Stevenson, Journal, Volume I., p. 176.
35. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXVIII., p. 81, cols. 6-7; March 6, 1861. The account of the inaugural in this paper gives the impression that the gloom of midnight had settled down over the country. No great care seems to have been taken to have a proper setting for the ceremony. "The canopy beneath which Mr. Lincoln delivered his Inaugural was of rough boards without ornament." It was affirmed that "the table before which Mr. Lincoln stood was of the commonest description, that could be purchased at a street auction for three shillings. The verdict of the crowd was that it was 'scandalous.'" Chief Justice Taney, who had administered the oath of office, and Stephen A. Douglas, who held Lincoln's hat during the ceremony, were two interested onlookers, the first of whom "sat eyeing the reader from the moment the first word was uttered to the last," while the latter "frequently, in a subdued voice, said, 'Good'; 'That is the right doctrine; 'That is no coercion,' etc."

CHAPTER XXIV

METHODISM AND DISUNION

In preceding chapters we have considered the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the formation of the Church, South; the adherence of preachers and societies to the Church of their choice and the division of the Church funds; the change in the sentiment of the two Churches towards slavery; and the attitude of the two branches of Methodism on political questions connected with slavery. Before we turn to a consideration of the part which the Methodist Churches played in the Civil War, it is important to fix the responsibility of Methodism for that conflict, so far as it is possible to do so. While it is true that other denominations—especially the Presbyterian and Baptist—divided on the issue of slavery, the very fact that the Methodist Episcopal Church was the first to separate on a problem connected with this question means that that Church should receive a larger share of the credit if that separation presaged the disunion of the Nation.

When, during the General Conference of 1844, John C. Calhoun invited William Capers and other southern delegates to meet him in Washington on their return from New York, in order that they might counsel together,¹ the division of the Methodist Church instantly took on a new significance. The Charleston *Mercury* published with the most favorable comment the "Protest" of southern delegates in the General Conference of 1844 and declared that it marked "an epoch—the first dissolution of the Union."² The Columbia *South Carolinian* asserted that the effect of the division would be felt in the Nation. Separation was considered desirable because it would promote peace in the Church and "arouse the North to a proper sense of the pernicious influence of abolitionism." If this should result, it was thought that it would "lead to a closer and happier union, religious and political. But if not, then it is evident that the separation will soon end in a political one."³

When Henry Clay was asked his opinion on the effect which the separation of the Church would have on national disunion, he replied: "I will not say that such a separation would necessarily produce a dissolution of the political union of these states; but the example would be fraught with imminent danger, and in co-operation with other unfortunate causes unfortunately existing, its tendency on the stability of the confederacy would be perilous and alarming."⁴ Another southern statesman was more bold. He was quoted as being in favor of the division of the Church, although he predicted the dissolution of the Union as a result.⁵

By 1850, the full significance of the division of the Methodist Church was more easily recognized. Both Calhoun and Webster referred to the strife which had resulted between the two Churches to show that the situation was full of the gravest danger and alarm if a more conciliatory spirit did not obtain in both sections. Webster said that there were many cords—spiritual and ecclesiastical, political and social—which bound the Nation together. Speaking of the Church, he declared: "The first of these cords which snapped under its explosive force, was that of the powerful Methodist Episcopal Church. The numerous and strong ties which held it together, are all broken, and its unity gone. They now form separate churches; and instead of the whole church which was formerly felt, they are now arrayed into two hostile bodies, engaged in litigation about what was formerly their common property."⁶

While the editor of the *Southwestern Christian Advocate* could see no connection between the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church and the dissolution of the Union,⁷ other southern Methodists freely predicted dire results for the Nation if the ecclesiastical struggle continued. One correspondent asserted that he had opposed division until 1844 "on the ground that, if we had Northern and Southern churches, it would not be long before we should have Northern and Southern Confederacies."⁸ And the editor of the *Southern Christian Advocate* wrote: "The feud occasioned, mark it, by the admission of political and extra-religious measures into the Church, will array political partizans on one or the other side, according to their sympathies with or against abolition:—and the upshot of the whole

matter will be a dissolution of our glorious confederacy—with civil war looming up in the distance and whetting his fangs for the blood of brothers. The experiment whether man is capable of self-government will end;—the noblest model of a free and republican confederacy of sovereign states which ever saw the light—will find its grave dug by Americans in the name of God and religion.”⁹

In the North, there was a like difference of opinion as to the effect which the division of the Church would have upon the preservation of the Union. The editor of the *Western Christian Advocate* agreed with the Nashville editor that there was no relation between the two calamities.¹⁰ The editor of *Zion's Herald*, replying to the fears of his contemporary of the *Southern Christian Advocate*, said: “As much as we honor Methodism we do think that this supreme importance attached to her influence on the destiny of the nation is supremely ridiculous. If the Methodist Church is becoming necessary to the existence of the state, it is high time she were overthrown. All good patriots should pray for its dissolution. The fact is our southern brethren have given themselves up to extravagances which give an air of almost ludicrous hyperbole to their writings and proceedings. Time will afford some curious retrospections.”¹¹

The division of the Methodist Episcopal Church was watched with the keenest interest by Wesleyan Methodists. The editor of their official paper, the *True Wesleyan*, declared that, while he thought the division of the Church would certainly be consummated at Louisville in 1845, this would not necessarily produce the disruption of the Union. But he believed that that event would “greatly weaken the cords of union.” He asserted that the question of slavery or liberty would soon be paramount in the thought of the people. Said he: “Other churches will most likely follow the example of the M. E. Church. *They must do this*. And the nation cannot long *brave* the moral sentiment of the country. And blessed be that day when the *ungodly* national compact shall be broken up! Slavery never would, never *could* have flourished in this land in the nineteenth century, controlling church and state, but for the connivance and support of the North. Cut off Northern support, in every sense, and you take its life-blood.” As to the possibility of civil

war between the two sections, the editor considered it beyond belief. "It is too late in the day to talk about a war between the North and the South. Such a war could not be maintained on the part of the South a single month; and those eyes which only see through cotton bags and human souls, *must see this*—however reckless they may be in other matters. Besides, the anti-war spirit and feeling is diffusing itself throughout creation. It is, therefore, we repeat, too late in the day to talk of a civil war in such a land as this."¹²

But Dr. Bond believed that the importance of the division was underestimated by other northerners. He showed from the statement of the governor of South Carolina that the relation between the ecclesiastical and political affairs was very intimate. Bond believed that the interest of Calhoun and the South Carolina governor in the proceedings of the General Conference of 1844 meant disunion for the nation. He urged that the political results would be much more serious than the ecclesiastical, and that Methodists should hesitate long before consummating separation.¹³

Peter Cartwright specifically charges that the division of the Church was the first great step in political disunion. He expressed the fear that "the constant agitation and unscrupulous anathemas indulged in by frenzied preachers and unprincipled demagogues, political demagogues, that seek more for the spoils of office than the freedom of the slave or the good of the country, will so burst the bonds of brotherly love and the real love of country, that all the horrors of civil war will break upon us shortly, and firebrands, arrows, and death, be thrown broadcast over the land, and anarchy, mobs, and lawless desperadoes reign triumphant."¹⁴

As the discussion of political questions connected with slavery continued, Methodist papers became more certain that civil war would be the outcome of the controversy. Leading writers shared their conviction. While Simpson made light of the fear of the South that disunion would result unless the Compromise of 1850 were adopted,¹⁵ the editor of the *Christian Advocate and Journal* declared in the same year that "the indications of a spirit of disunion have been too plain to be mistaken." The agitation of the subject of slavery in papers and conferences of the Church was considered "highly inexpedient, not to say dangerous." As

a result, the nation had been brought to "the very verge of a fearful vortex." As to the future, the editor said: "Let the system of agitation be pressed a step or two farther, and the United States of America may be plunged into the horrors of a civil war—a thing infinitely more injurious, even to the coloured race, than slavery itself."¹⁶ In 1856, Cartwright wrote a scathing denunciation of abolitionists,¹⁷ and added: "I am perfectly satisfied that if force is resorted to, this glorious Union will be dissolved, a civil war will follow, death and carnage will ensue, and the only free nation on earth will be destroyed."¹⁸ Again he predicted that the results of the agitation and strife and compromises would be disunion, war, "and rivers of human blood" which would "stain the soil of our happy country."¹⁹

Among southerners there developed a similar conviction that civil war was imminent. The editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* cited the action of a convention in South Carolina, in 1852, where it was asserted that they had good grounds for withdrawing from the Union but declined doing so only because it was considered inexpedient.²⁰ Governor Campbell of Tennessee saw the outcome of secession perhaps more clearly than most leaders of his section. No northerner who advocated the further centralization of government could improve on his statement of the situation.* "When we look calmly and thoroughly at the matter, it must strike us as idle and insane to talk about seceding from or dissolving the Union, in quiet and peace, by consent. *This is impossible.* Civil war will inevitably and naturally follow the one or the other. Secession is separation, and disguise it as you may, it implies and intends a separate organization and a separate government. Should one State prove successful, others would seek to follow the example and in the course of time, we should probably have thirty or more petty republics, wrangling and quarreling and fighting."²¹

In January, 1860, southern Methodist papers boldly espoused the cause of secession. The editor of the *Richmond Christian Advocate* set forth with evident approval that the South was arming; that non-intercourse with the North was becoming very popular among southerners; and that the dissolution of the Union was considered inevitable. The only hope for the continuance of a united nation was in the

conservative party in the North. But that the editor had little confidence in the North is clear from his statement that the South was "concentrating on the single principle of self-preservation and separate independence, for Southern conservatism" was "fast settling on this principle."²² Before the election of Lincoln, the *North Carolina Christian Advocate* declared that the Union would not survive a year if he were successful. But the editor of that paper was perfectly aware of the consequences. "A dissolution of this Union cannot be peaceful. It will be followed by a civil war, the most inveterate and horrible."²³

Despite the knowledge that civil war would follow secession, there were Methodists in the South, even before the nomination of Lincoln, who talked about the advantages of disunion. One writer declared that "the probabilities and advantages of an independent Southern confederacy are matters current in conversation and journalism." He believed that New Orleans would probably become the great center of trade for the new nation, and that the capital would be in the neighborhood of that city. Cuba and Spanish America, as far as the Isthmus of Panama, might be added to the new southern nation. The writer viewed the new government as an accomplished fact. "What a dazzling dream of empire! to be at length disentangled from the cold North, and to have free and unembarrassed development for our peculiar resources and proclivities. Divide the federal property peaceably, and dissolve the political partnership. Split the American eagle in twain, and the star-spangled banner, the grave of Washington and the memories of the Revolution."²⁴

The Methodist Episcopal Church, South, has been charged with the responsibility for the Civil War. That the preachers and editors of that Church advocated disunion even though it might lead to a struggle has already been shown.²⁵ Brunson declares that they were responsible for the catastrophe because they stood for slavery and because, being the largest Church, their influence was greater. He concludes his tirade against southern Methodists by a brief review of the separation and shows to his own satisfaction that the division of the Methodist Church was the beginning of a series of events which led directly to the war.²⁶

On the other hand, Armstrong cites McTyiere's "History of Methodism" to prove that the Methodist Church was in no sense responsible for the Civil War. He says that abolitionists had sought to succeed in their program through the Church, and that when they were defeated there, they turned to politics and won their battle for the freedom of the slaves. Armstrong affirms that it was "a well known fact that, after defeat on religious and moral lines, they began by spurning the Bible and the civil Constitution, and that they honored the churches by their denunciation."²⁷

To assign to either Southern or Northern Methodists the responsibility for the "Irrepressible Conflict" is more than can be done with certainty. But that the division of the Methodist Episcopal Church was a very powerful factor in the attempt at disunion can not be denied. It will be remembered that the northern delegates to the General Conference of 1844 accepted division as the way out of a bad situation; both considered it a final resort. Because a division of the Church took place, it did not necessarily follow that there must also be disunion of the states. If it had not been for the bitterness aroused on both sides of the "line of separation" and especially if it had not been for the dispute, extending over a period of years, concerning the common property of Methodism, it is altogether probable that the talk of dissolving the Union would have been greatly minimized. But thoughtful argument is always at a premium when passions are aroused, and especially when the point of view of the opposition is not thoroughly understood.

But whether the Methodist Church in the South or that in the North, or neither, was directly responsible for the Civil War, the time had come when slavery was to receive its death-blow. To accomplish this result, war must be the portion of the Nation for four years; and millions of money and thousands of human lives must be sacrificed. The Civil War was waged to preserve the Union, but it became impossible to avoid the issue of emancipation²⁸ as a contributing cause of the greater and more immediate problem of secession.

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1. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XV., No. 33; August 28, 1851. The letter is also quoted in Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, p. 190.
 2. Elliott, *The Great Secession*, cols. 432-3. See also, Norwood, *The Schism in the Methodist Church*, 1844, p. 188 and *The Liberator*,

- Volume XIV., p. 113, col. 3; July 19, 1844.
3. The Liberator, Volume XIV., p. 105, col. 6; July 5, 1844. Cf. Ibid., p. 141, col. 1; September 6, 1844 where the *Belknap Gazette* is quoted as predicting that the political union would not outlast the division of the Methodist Church six months.
 4. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume XIX., p. 157, col. 1; May 14, 1845. Cf. Democratic Statesman, Volume I., p. 80; May 10, 1845. This latter paper was published for nine months for the purpose of "redeeming" Tennessee from Whiggism to "her ancient democratic position." (Found in the Tennessee Historical Library).
Garrison commented: "Only think of the advice of a politician, like Henry Clay, being sought by the Church of Christ (!) for its guidance in the path of duty!" (The Liberator, Volume XV., p. 78, col. 2; May 16, 1845).
 5. Elliott, The Great Secession, cols. 433-4.
 6. Webster, Writings, Volume X., p. 63. Cf. Calhoun, Works, Volume IV., pp. 557-8. This is a part of Webster's famous speech in the debate on the Compromise of 1850, delivered March 7, 1850.
 7. Southwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., No. 11; January 10, 1845.
 8. Richmond Christian Advocate, Volume XIII., pp. 158, col. 6 and 159, col. 1; December 4, 1845.
 9. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XV., p. 122, col. 4; July 31, 1844.
 10. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XI., p. 70, cols. 1-2; August 16, 1844.
 11. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XV., p. 122, col. 4; July 31, 1844.
 12. Quoted in the Liberator, Volume XIV., p. 126, col. 3; August 9, 1844.
 13. Norwood, The Schism in the Methodist Church, 1844, pp. 191-3.
 14. Cartwright, Autobiography, pp. 439-40.
 15. Crooks, Life of Bishop Simpson, pp. 262-5. Cf. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XVII., p. 70, cols. 2-3; May 1, 1850.
 16. Nashville and Louisville Christian Advocate, Volume XV., January 9, 1851. The item is taken from the Christian Advocate and Journal of December 26, 1850.
 17. "I have never seen a rabid abolition or free-soil society that I could join, because they resort to unjustifiable agitation, and the means they employ are generally unchristian. They condemn and confound the innocent with the guilty; the means they employ are not truthful, at all times; . . ."
 18. Cartwright, Autobiography, p. 129.
 19. Ibid., p. 158. "If agitation must succeed agitation, strife succeed strife, compromise succeed compromise, it will end in a dissolution of this blessed Union, civil war will follow, and rivers of human blood stain the soil of our happy country."
 20. Nashville, Christian Advocate, Volume XVI., May 13, 1852.
 21. Ibid., Volume XV., October 23, 1851.
 22. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 210-11.
 23. Ibid., p. 225.
 24. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXIV., February 16, 1860.
 25. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 30, gives another example.
 26. Brunson, A Western Pioneer, Volume I., p. 396.
 27. Armstrong, The Old Baltimore Conference, p. 275.
 28. See the Minutes of the Providence Conference, 1855, p. 19, for an interesting statement of the existence of slavery and freedom side by side. It reads as follows: "Slavery in our country exists in the very presence of Christianity, simply because Christianity is not so administered as to abolish it; and Christian churches and slave barricoons; protracted meetings and slave auctions; gospel ministers and negro traders; revivals of religion and pro-slavery caucuses; bibles, hymn books, disciplines and chains, whips and thumb screws; pious prayers and cries of distress; shouts of praise and wails of despair; collections for the support of missions abroad,

and the sale of Christ's church at home to supply the means; a holy indignation against infanticide and Sutteeism in India, and the forcible separation of Christian families at home; crowds of devoted worshippers with prayer books in hand passing through the streets to the house of God, on one day, and coffles of manacled slaves under the whip of the soul drivers, destined for the shambles of the far South, defiling along the same streets, the next—all strangely mingled together, in one country."

PART V

THE PERIOD OF CIVIL WAR

CHAPTER XXV

THE LOYALTY OF NORTHERN METHODISTS

The Methodist Episcopal Church has always been proud of its record of devotion to the Union during the Civil War. "*Methodism is loyalty*" asserted one conference,¹ and the estimate that one hundred thousand Methodist soldiers were to be found in northern armies² indicates that the claim to loyalty was no idle boast. And, if there were any doubt as to the regard in which the Methodist Church was held by the National Government, it would be dispelled by the statement of President Lincoln, made in response to an address of the General Conference of the Church in 1864. "Nobly sustained as the government has been by all the churches, I would utter nothing which might in the least appear invidious against any. Yet, without this, it may fairly be said that the Methodist Episcopal Church not less devoted than the best, is by its greater numbers the most important of all. It is no fault in others that the Methodist Church sends more soldiers to the field, more nurses to the hospital, and more prayers to Heaven than any."³

Lincoln, perhaps more than any other man, kept constantly in mind the paramount purpose of the North in coercing the southern states—namely, the preservation of the Union. During the first few months of the war, Methodist leaders were in complete agreement with him. To permit southerners to secede from the Union was considered unthinkable. War might come if an attempt were made to prevent the extension of slavery, but even war, while terrible and opposed to the spirit of the Bible, was not the greatest evil.⁴ "It is a greater calamity to permit the spirit of mobocracy to remain rampant, destroying all rights of citizens. It is a greater calamity to submit to the extinction of the freedom of the press, and speech, and to degenerate into the system of Austria, or Florence." Watson believed it would be worse than war to have slavery control all the territories and seize

from Mexico some of that nation's best provinces and stock them with slaves. He concluded that the only possible action for the Government was to resist secession.⁴ After the war had begun, the same editor asserted that the attack of the Government was not "upon the institution of slavery, nor with a design to destroy it. The administration has no such design, and cannot have, and it is not best that any should be deceived. The sole design of the administration is to maintain the authority of the nation to uphold the majesty of law, and 'hold and possess' national property."⁵

Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, on the whole, strongly supported the President in his determination to suppress the rebellion. The records of over thirty of these bodies for the years of the war show a very general and hearty approval of the aims of the Washington Government. One conference was opposed to "all inflammatory speeches, and treasonable utterances designed to convey sympathy to the enemies of the nation, to discourage and distract the loyal masses, and to subvert the vile purposes of unprincipled partizans and demagogues."⁶ Another body of ministers declared with emphasis that "this infernal rebellion, the most hellish since Satan seceded from the government of Heaven, must be put down, cost what it may."⁷ With such sentiments current throughout most of the northern Church, the enthusiasm of Genesee conference may be imagined when a beautifully carved cane was shown to that body. "The serpent of secession was (shown) endeavoring to destroy Liberty and her children, and the strong talons of the Eagle avenger were on the reptile's throat." As it was intended to do, "it suggested stinging rebuke to 'Copper heads', and breathed 'Death to Traitors.'"⁸

Without exception, bishops of the northern Methodist Church were actively loyal to the Washington Government. At Genesee conference, October 16, 1861, just before the unanimous vote was taken in support of the National Government and in condemnation of the rebellion, Bishop Ames delivered a spirited address to the ministers on national affairs. "He thought that, were it his duty to join the Union army and fight the rebels, he should shoot very fast, he would 'fire into them most benevolently.'"⁹ May 17,

1861, Bishop Morris wrote a letter urging the fullest support of the Federal Government. He discouraged political divisions and said there were only loyal and disloyal people—"there is no middle ground." The Bible, and especially the writings of St. Paul, were cited to show that God was the "source of civil authority" and that he required obedience to the civil governments from all the people. "To deny either of these propositions is virtually to deny the truth of God's Word."¹⁰ Bishops Janes, Scott and Baker also wrote messages of encouragement to Elliott, who, at that time, was struggling manfully against secessionists in St. Louis and other points in Missouri.¹¹

But, of all the bishops, Simpson possessed most fully the confidence of the President and people. Even before Lincoln went to Washington, he and the bishop were in conference several times.¹² In April, 1861, after the President made his call for the first seventy-five thousand volunteers to suppress the rebellion, Simpson expressed his conviction that only a beginning had been made and that a prolonged struggle might be expected. Seward was skeptical relative to the accuracy of the bishop's opinions on war and politics but both Bates and Blair were convinced that, because he had travelled so extensively, he was especially well qualified to interpret the spirit of the nation. On numerous occasions Simpson was called to Washington to consult with the President on the general situation throughout the North. He was one of the few men who could influence the burly Stanton and was often employed by Lincoln for that purpose. And it was Simpson who spoke the final words at the tomb of the martyred president.¹³

Bishop Simpson contributed to the winning of the war by his interest in the Sanitary Commission and the Christian Commission. The first was patterned after the work of Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War; the second was the idea of the Young Men's Christian Association. It was in behalf of the former, and representing the President, that Simpson delivered a notable address in Philadelphia, in which he lauded the purposes and accomplishments of this organization.¹⁴ When the Christian Commission was dissolved in February, 1866, it was Bishop Simpson who was chosen to

deliver the final address in the House of Representatives. Here again, those who served their country—this time by their interest in the religious welfare of the soldiers—were praised for their endeavors and bidden to continue their work in other fields.¹⁵

Simpson was a magnetic and powerful speaker. At Chillicothe, Ohio, members of Ohio and Cincinnati conferences were his audience. So excited did people become that handkerchiefs were waved, hats thrown in the air, and all the people were standing when the bishop finished his address.¹⁶ In November, 1864, he spoke to a packed house in the Academy of Music, New York City. Here he spoke of the possibilities of Americans rising from the humblest circumstances to places of responsibility and trust, and of the results of disunion. While he appealed to the religious nature of the people, he did not hesitate to say that he would not give a cent on a dollar for the debts owed by the Government if a line of division were run through the country from East to West. He declared that twenty years of war would be preferable to a settlement at that time.¹⁷ Lincoln's only criticism of this address, which had previously been delivered in Washington, was that, in mentioning the great natural resources of the country, Simpson did not "strike ile." Thereafter the oil interests were not forgotten.¹⁸

The influence of northern Methodists on the outcome of the war and the recognition of their patriotism may be illustrated by their relation to four situations. The first of these was the maintenance and strengthening of Union sentiment in western Virginia. A writer in a southern Methodist paper¹⁹ stated that, should the South be successful in western Virginia, northern Methodists would lose their influence in that section.²⁰ The struggle for ecclesiastical supremacy probably increased the patriotic zeal of northern preachers. One of these declared that he did not know of half a dozen northern ministers who were in favor of the South. The relation between ecclesiastical and political forces was clearly stated. "We preach in favor of Union. We pray for it, and we talk for it, and defend it among the people. If Western Virginia is saved, she will owe her salvation more to Methodism, under God, than to any other agency. The

enemies of the Government are the enemies of the Methodist Episcopal Church.”²¹ It was a northern preacher, Gordon D. Battelle, who, with F. H. Pierpont, the first governor of West Virginia, was responsible for the inauguration of this new commonwealth.²² The loyalty of western Virginia was credited to ministers and members of the northern Methodist Church in that section.²³

That which was threatened by southerners in western Virginia was also predicted in Missouri—that Methodism of the northern type would be proscribed by Confederates if they were successful in the insurrection against the Government.²⁴ But in Missouri, also, there were a few northern Methodists who heroically defended the cause of freedom and Union. Led by Charles Elliott, the editor of the *Central Christian Advocate*, Methodists of St. Louis became the nucleus around which gathered the loyal people of the city and the state. Though threatened with arrest by pro-slavery men, Elliott defiantly displayed the Stars and Stripes from the office window of the Book Concern. Protests against the curtailment of loyalists’ rights were made by this editor, while many ministers joined the Union forces as privates, officers of infantry and chaplains. Patriotic meetings were held, war speeches delivered and the people encouraged in their support of the Union. Disloyalty was heavily condemned and arguments of southerners refuted. In Missouri, the name of Elliott deserves to rank with that of Battelle in West Virginia.²⁵

The third incident which shows the place of the northern Methodist Church in the Civil War was the occupation of southern Methodist church property by northern Methodists. As early as April, 1862, bishops and the Missionary Board were being urged “to follow the army of the Union in its triumphant march with institutions, the discipline and the ministry of the Methodist Episcopal Church.” The means for such an extension of the Church’s work had been provisionally supplied, for there was a great surplus of ministers in eastern conferences. That patriotic considerations were not the only ones which influenced them is clear from the statement that this surplus had been “provided by the Head of the Church for our right and perpetual re-occupation of

the territory which was wrested from us in the great secession of 1844.”²⁶ In South Carolina, northerners were so extreme as to consider vacant churches of southern Methodists the legal property of the northern Church, and gave the punishment of the Church, South, as the reason for their action. But the editor of *The Methodist* showed that the United States Supreme Court had declared that these churches were the property of the Methodist Church, South. “The recommendation of a measure so dishonorable in itself is well calculated to degrade the Church in the estimation of all sensible men.”²⁷

Whether Methodist bishops urged that southern churches be turned over to northern Methodists is uncertain, although there is some evidence to support such a contention.²⁸ But on November 30, 1863, the Secretary of War issued his famous “Stanton-Ames Order,” in which northern generals were “directed to place at the disposal of Rev. Bishop Ames all houses of worship belonging to the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, in which a loyal minister who has been appointed by a loyal Bishop of said church does not officiate.” The purpose was to rally a strong union sentiment and aid in restoring “tranquility to the community and peace to the nation.”²⁹ By Christmas, 1863, the order was being carried out. Wesley Chapel in Memphis, Tennessee, was handed over to Bishop Ames simply because a loyal minister was not in charge of the congregation.³⁰

According to one southern apologist, northern Methodists soon began to take possession of southern churches without military orders.³¹ Bishop Simpson is charged with ordering southern Methodists to vacate McKendree Church in Nashville.³² The same authority declares that the abuse of Stanton’s order became so intolerable that President Lincoln himself found it necessary to interpose his veto. In a statement of February 13, 1864, the President showed that the Secretary of War had exempted Missouri and that Kentucky never had been included in his order. He declared that the sole purpose of the Secretary’s order was to rally loyal Methodists to the Union cause in sections in which they had become disorganized. He even suggested that it might be necessary and desirable to withdraw the privileges of the

northern Church entirely.³³ The action of the President may have been responsible for resolutions of Missouri conference in 1864 commending Bishop Ames for not occupying southern churches in that state. The more probable reason is that many southern Methodist preachers who were loyal to the northern cause were joining the northern Church and they feared lest that movement might possibly be stopped.³⁴

Except for a few questions connected with the slavery issue, northern Methodist leaders had rather consistently held the view that as an organization they should not attempt to influence the political situation. But in the election of 1864 it was easy to consider that event as a factor in the suppression of the "hellish" rebellion. In this crisis, northern Methodist leaders did not hesitate. As early as February, 1863 Elliott rejoiced that political parties were so badly shattered as a result of the war. Instead of the Republican party a Union or National party had been organized, whose chief purpose was the prosecution of the war until victory was attained. On the other hand, the Democratic party had become the organization in which might be found "*neutrals*, sympathizers, and rebels, or traitors."³⁵ When the Democrats nominated George B. McClellan, the action was openly ridiculed by the editor of *Zion's Herald*.³⁶

Northern conferences were also interested in the election of 1864. Wisconsin conference asserted that it was their duty to stir the Church and the people generally to a realization of the danger which threatened them if the Democrats were successful.³⁷ South West German conference warned the people not to be deceived in the election, the intimation being that they should support Lincoln.³⁸ After adopting resolutions in support of the Government, Rock River conference declared that, "inasmuch as participation in the choice of rulers and representatives is both a national privilege and a Christian duty," they favored making all necessary arrangements so that, in case of a change of residence, "not a vote may be lost by which the national honor may be periled."³⁹ Genesee conference asserted that the questions to be decided were not simply political but rather moral, and that the people would be divided into two parties: namely, "*Patriots and Traitors*."⁴⁰

One of the most important addresses delivered in behalf of Lincoln during the campaign of 1864 was that of Bishop Simpson, November 3, 1864. Before an immense New York audience, he gave his great lecture on "Our Country" which had created such an intense spirit of loyalty in many other cities. This speech was reported by the leading New York papers so that he spoke to the whole nation. It probably had a large part in completing the splendid victory obtained by the President in the November election.⁴¹

While the Methodist Episcopal Church as a whole was loyal to the Government, there were certain sections and groups that were decidedly unpatriotic. The disloyal sentiment may have been the result of editorials in the *Western Christian Advocate* and the *Baltimore Christian Advocate*. In 1861, just before the inauguration of Lincoln, the editor of the former wrote: "We entirely agree with the notion that it would be highly impolitic to attempt to force an unwilling state to remain in the Union."⁴² The latter paper published articles so favorable to the South that many members withdrew from the northern Church and supported the Confederacy.⁴³

With such sentiments current in Methodist papers it is not surprising that there was disaffection even in the North. East Genesee conference was divided on the action that should be taken relative to national affairs.⁴⁴ During the years 1863 and 1864 there was no report by these ministers on "The State of the Country."⁴⁵ While Erie conference as a whole was loyal to the North,⁴⁶ there were many instances of disloyalty among both ministers and members. October 14, 1862, ministers of Meadville District met at Conneautville, Pennsylvania. Reports from various ministers indicated that there was considerable disaffection in their own territory. The minister from Salem reported: "A good many sympathizers with the South. We preach as much war as we can without cutting their heads off." The preacher from Saegertown said some sympathized with the South and created as much opposition as possible for those who were loyal. Another reported that all loyal men had gone to the war and left at home those who favored the rebellion. On the following day, the preachers held a patriotic meeting,

with addresses by two of their number on "The Moral Aspects of the Present War."⁴⁷

February 24, 1863, the same ministers met at Cochranston, Pennsylvania, and declared that it was not Christian to give support or extend sympathy to those who opposed the Government, discouraged enlistments or slandered ministers.⁴⁸ June 9 of the same year they met at Linesville, Pennsylvania. Again there were reports from ministers. One said he had attempted to accommodate himself to disloyalists but had found it impossible, and he had launched out in an attack upon slavery. Another declared he had shown his loyalty by cutting off all copperheads. Josiah Flower reported: "Stars and Stripes go with me. Disloyalists threatened to starve me but have not done it. 'Copperheads' will give nothing. Have expelled three."⁴⁹ Just how many ministers were disloyal is impossible to determine; but at the session of Erie conference in 1863 Judge Chaffee was requested to administer the oath of allegiance to members of the conference.⁵⁰

While Philadelphia conference adopted loyal resolutions in 1862,⁵¹ these ministers had so far lost their enthusiasm by 1863, that they asked the President to appoint a day of fasting and prayer, to be observed by all Christian people, for the termination of the rebellion.⁵² And while they had returned to their former loyalty by 1864, they declared that some ministers and members had been disloyal and should withdraw from the Church.⁵³

Methodists of Baltimore conferences were probably more disloyal than any others in the northern Church. The fact that the conferences included territory kept in the Union only by force indicates that the people were not as loyal as was desired. While East Baltimore conference adopted resolutions favorable to the President in 1862,⁵⁴ there was no expression in support of the Government the following year after the Emancipation Proclamation had been issued.⁵⁵ was defeated, 37 to 11. But a resolution was adopted which

Especially interesting were the proceedings of Baltimore conference, which met at Georgetown, D. C. in 1863. One resolution, pledging the support of the conference to the Government and sympathy and prayers for the President

read: "Resolved, That the President of the United States of America be respectfully requested to appoint a day of national fasting and prayer to Almighty God, that it may please him to bring our civil war to an end, and restore us unity, peace, and prosperity." In the course of the debate on this resolution, the Rev. J. Bull, a chaplain of the 5th Maryland regiment, declared that "State matters ought not to be touched. *He hated abolitionism as he did hell.* Any resolution in reference to the President would destroy the Church. Pass it, and there were scores of Methodists in Baltimore and adjacent places who will leave the Church." Another minister said he was not in favor of the resolution because "he did not pray for the success of either the Federal or Confederate arms—*he did not know which was right.*"⁵⁶

This lack of support of the Government and the President was unsparingly condemned. Writing in regard to the action of Baltimore conference, one observer concluded: "Such an exhibition of moral rottenness, as is here seen, cannot be paralleled outside the Baltimore Conference, unless in the conclaves of the Knights of the Golden Circle, or the Five Points in New York. After the late action of this body of moral lepers, if it did not stink in the nostrils of all decent people forever, then the religious condition of the country is most deplorable indeed. This is the second attempt made to pass resolutions—faintly and feebly endorsing the Government and condemning treason, with the same result. I have met a few of these Methodist wolves in sheep's clothing, since the Conference has been in session, and so far as I have observed, they are generally a tobacco-chewing, cigar-smoking, and evidently whiskey-drinking set of rowdies, unworthy in any respect to be recognized as gentlemen."⁵⁶

The sweeping claim to loyalty made by members and ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church must be modified to conform with the facts. The statement of President Lincoln can still be quoted by those who take pride in the war record of the Methodist Episcopal Church. But Lincoln, who was undoubtedly familiar with the fact that certain sections of the Church were disloyal, did not affirm that there were no traces of opposition in northern Methodism. He simply said that more had been done by this Church than

by any other to support the Union cause. The situation in East Genesee and Erie conferences is difficult to explain, unless the "copperheads" remained at home while the others joined the northern army. As for the border, the explanation is comparatively easy. Situated as these conferences were in slave territory, they simply reflected the opinions of the people whom they served. A strict adherence to the truth, therefore, will compel those who tell the story of Methodist achievement in the Civil War also to refer to the disloyalty which unquestionably existed in some conferences.

1. Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference, 1863, p. 37.
2. Minutes of the Upper Iowa Conference, 1864, p. 23.
3. Nicolay and Hay (editors), *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume II., p. 522. Cf. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, facing pp. 396-7.
4. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 4, col. 2; January 2, 1861. Watson believed that the war could not last long. "It is useless to conceal the fact that a conflict is almost inevitable. It will be short, sharp, and bloody. The day for long wars is over."
5. *Ibid.*, p. 164, col. 2; May 22, 1861.
6. Minutes of the Detroit Conference, 1864, p. 12.
7. Minutes of the West Wisconsin Conference, 1862, p. 11.
8. Conable, *History of Genesee Conference*, p. 674.
9. *Ibid.*, pp. 669-70.
10. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 268-70.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 272.
12. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 370.
13. *Ibid.*, pp. 373-5, 397-403.
14. *Ibid.*, pp. 391-5.
15. *Ibid.*, pp. 403-6.
16. *Ibid.*, pp. 378-80.
17. *Ibid.*, pp. 381-5.
18. *Ibid.*, pp. 372-3.
19. *The Nashville Christian Advocate*.
20. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 210, col. 3; July 10, 1861.
21. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 264-5.
22. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 283, and footnote.
23. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXXIII., p. 198, col. 3; December 10, 1862.
24. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 219, col. 3; July 10, 1861.
25. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 243-6, 263-72, 298, 310-13, 334-5, 365, 370-71, 396, 416-17. The latter part of the volume is a complete apology for the North during the Civil War.
26. Minutes of the New England Conference, 1862, pp. 23-4. That the northern Methodist Church should occupy southern churches was also the opinion of the Erie conference (see Fradenburgh, *History of Erie Conference*, Volume II., p. 529).
27. *The Methodist*, Volume IV., p. 308, col. 6; October 3, 1863.
28. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 397.
29. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri*, Volume I., p. 254; Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction*, Volume II., p. 221.
30. Fleming, *Documentary History of Reconstruction*, Volume II., p. 222.
31. Leftwich, *Martyrdom in Missouri*, Volume I., pp. 179 ff.

32. *Ibid.*, p. 266.
33. *Ibid.*, p. 264. Cf. Nicolay and Hay (editors), *Complete works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume II., p. 481. Said Lincoln: "I fear it is liable to some abuses, but it is not quite easy to withdraw it entirely and at once."
34. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, pp. 464-5.
35. pp. 416-17.
36. *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXXV., p. 142, cols. 3-4; September 7, 1864.
37. Minutes of the Wisconsin Conference, 1864, p. 23.
38. *The Liberator*, Volume XXXIV., p. 170, col. 5; October 21, 1864.
39. Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1864, pp. 25-6.
40. Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1864, pp. 11-12.
41. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, pp. 381-6.
42. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XXVIII., p. 68, col. 1; February 27, 1861.
43. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, p. 299.
44. Minutes of the East Genesee Conference, 1862, p. 7.
45. *Ibid.*, for the years 1863 and 1864.
46. Fradenburgh, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II., pp. 527-8.
47. *Ibid.* pp. 529-30.
48. *Ibid.*, pp. 530-31.
49. *Ibid.*, p. 531.
50. *Ibid.*, pp. 532-3.
51. Minutes of the Philadelphia Conference, 1862, pp. 45-6.
52. *Ibid.*, 1863, p. 48.
53. *Ibid.*, 1864, pp. 44-5, 48.
54. Nicolay and Hay, *Complete Works of Lincoln*, Volume II., pp. 152-3.
55. Cf. Minutes of the Baltimore Conference for the year 1863.
56. *The Liberator*, Volume XXXIII., p. 53, cols. 2-3; April 3, 1863.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE LOYALTY OF SOUTHERN METHODISTS

From a northern point of view, southerners of the Civil War period were the worst of traitors ; from a southern viewpoint, those who defended the South against invasion by northern "oppressors" were, and still are, considered worthy of the greatest honor. Had Jefferson Davis been approached on the subject, he could have written an appraisal of the loyalty of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, which, with all due regard for the facts, would have rivaled the statement of President Lincoln to the General Conference of 1864. To interpret the action of the southern Church from the southern point of view is the purpose of this chapter.

Conferences in the extreme South gave their enthusiastic approval when plans for secession were under consideration. Five days before South Carolina seceded from the Union, the conference of that state declared in favor of the proposed action. The conference chairman asserted that "the interests of the Southern States are identical, and we must *hang together or hang by ourselves*." They pledged their sympathy and support to the State in meeting northern attempts at suppression.¹ Alabama conference, having stated that the election of Lincoln compelled southerners to defend their rights, pledged their support to Alabama, Florida and Mississippi, parts of which were included within the bounds of the conference.² Of the ninety-six preachers in Georgia conference, only nine were opposed to secession.² The attitude of all these conferences was substantially that of Shanondale Circuit of Baltimore conference. At a meeting held in Jefferson County, Virginia, November 19, 1860, they declared they would wait "until our wise statesmen and the people generally have taken their stand—then, as a Church, we will follow, and not lead."³ In none of these resolutions was there an attempt to delay secession, but in every instance the support of the Church was promised to the states rather than the national government.

Southern Methodist papers were likewise for the South. The *New Orleans Christian Advocate* rejected the thought of submission to the North and urged that the rights of their section be maintained.⁴ In December, 1860, the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* advised the Southwest to support the coming Confederate Government and declared that all the people, and especially Methodists, desired a separation from the North.⁵ Writing the following month, the same editor asserted that the secession of southern states from the Union might confidently be expected.⁶ Shortly after the struggle commenced, he again expressed himself in favor of secession and the Confederate Government. "We are for the Confederate States and their success in this war. Call you that secession? By that or any other name you like—disunion, rebellion, revolution." The people of Tennessee were urged to return a unanimous vote in favor of secession and in support of the Constitution of the Confederate States of America.⁷

When the Civil War had become an actuality, southern Methodists were almost wholly on the side of the Confederacy. The bishops of the Church were loyal adherents of the provisional government.⁸ Bishop Early offered prayer at the opening of the fourth session of the Confederate Congress.⁹ Bishop Andrew was especially active in his support of the South and wrote many articles to encourage the people.¹⁰ In a statement printed in the *Southern Christian Advocate* in June, 1861, he reminded Confederate women that their relatives had been particularly loyal to the Revolutionary cause, and that, in the conflict with the North, he believed the old devotion would be equalled. He urged that southerners were fighting for their homes, and that, even if the North were successful against them—which he did not think was probable—abolitionists would be ruined because of the cost of the war. He believed that the South would be victorious because their purpose was righteous; because the South—"thanks to Lincoln's folly and perfidy"—was firmly united; and because they were fighting for their homes. He further declared that the South had "an army made up of the very best material, and commanded by officers second to none on earth." Finally, he asserted that many southern soldiers were earnest Christians, as were the people at home, and the united

prayers of all the people in behalf of their cause would certainly prevail.¹¹

The loyalty of southern Methodist papers to the Confederacy is abundantly shown by their statements during the war and by the action taken against them by the Washington Government and the generals of the North. The *New Orleans Christian Advocate* commended the attitude of southern people towards the new Government, and especially because the religious element was so prominent in everything they did. "The truth is, it is a religious war. It is a defense of the rights of conscience."¹² A month later, it made the following comparison of Davis and Lincoln: "Davis is the very soul of courage, honor and chivalry: Lincoln is a cowardly sneak. In the midst of the present storm, Davis is calm, cool, generally cheerful, comprehensive in observation, rigidly keeping his own counsel. Lincoln is filled with abject fear, drunk half the time, occasionally foolishly whistling to keep up his courage!"¹³ By June, 1862, the paper had been suspended because of the scarcity of paper and all the employees had joined the Confederate forces.¹⁴

The *Texas Christian Advocate* was also loyal to the South. The editor, Dr. Carnes, wrote that he had learned with surprise that southern people were concerned about the attitude of Texas. In reply he declared that the opinion was "universal, among white and black, that Texas 'unrestrained by Divine grace,' can whip any two of the Northern States." The fact that a northern Methodist referred to the *Pacific Methodist* as "the pro-slavery—secession—rebellion—treasonable sheet"¹⁵ indicates that this southern Methodist paper was aiding the South. The *Owachita Conference Journal* saw the hand of God in the fact that their crops, which had been very light the previous years, gave promise of an abundant harvest. The people were urged to "build, plant, worship, erect schools, press on with every glorious enterprise. War against unbelief, lying, cheating, abolitionism, whiskey and the devil; and in humble faith anticipate the day when the land shall have her rest and be overspread by a Sabbath day of holiness."¹⁶

The *St. Louis Christian Advocate* aided the southern cause at every opportunity. The editor, Dr. M'Anally, praised the work of southerners and encouraged the people as

much as possible. He was an associate of the editor of the *Missouri State Journal*, and after the suppression of that paper by the United States Government, the subscribers of the *Journal* subscribed for the *Advocate*.¹⁷ M'Anally attempted to show that he was not disloyal to the northern Government, but he had little success in his representations to the military authorities.¹⁸ When the North obtained some success in Missouri and the West, he saw only desolation for the country because of the northern invasion.¹⁹ In the Spring of 1862 the *Advocate* was suppressed and the editor arrested and thrown into prison in St. Louis.²⁰ In 1863 he was sentenced to banishment to the South, but the sentence was never carried out. In connection with this sentence, the *Missouri Democrat*, a paper in sympathy with the North, stated: "His (M'Anally's) paper, the *Advocate* was a viper concern, and, while permitted by the military authorities to exist, did more, in an insidious way, to poison the public mind of Missouri toward the (Washington) Government than almost any other treasonable agency among us."²¹

The *Nashville Christian Advocate* published the Constitution of the Confederate States of America,²² and also, with evident satisfaction, printed replies of the governors of Delaware, Maryland, Virginia, Tennessee, Kentucky and Missouri, refusing the request for troops with which to suppress the rebellion.²³ The editor urged the South to unite and resist the attempt of the North to coerce them. Comparing the resources of the two sections, he concluded that the South was much superior. "They have more soldiers: we the better cause. Their fanatical hordes may descend upon us from the North and East, and they will doubtless seek to arouse against us Indians on the South and West, and to convert the docile slaves in our midst into assassins." But all this strength would prove unavailing for "what are all these against a people fighting for rights and homes? A people in the right, and whose arms and valor have won for the old Union its chief military glories? *We have no fear for the result; none at all.*" The people were warned, however, to save their powder, repair their guns and form organizations of home guards. The southern soldier was considered irresistible—"One true Southern man can chase a dozen Yankees."²³

The Publishing House at Nashville further showed that southern Methodists approved the Confederacy by issuing a "Confederate Almanac" in which the Richmond Government was recognized and praised, while the Washington Government was denounced.²⁴ Under the auspices of the Soldiers Tract Society, thousands of hymn-books for soldiers were printed.²⁵ In 1862, when an officer of the United States army visited the Publishing House, he found that the basement of the building had been used to manufacture Confederate war materials.²⁶ Because of its opposition to the North, the Book Concern was closed and later confiscated by United States officials.²⁷ The editor and publisher went further south,²⁸ and the paper was combined with the *Southern Christian Advocate* and published at Atlanta, Georgia.²⁹

The two leading southern Methodist papers east of the mountains were those at Charleston and Richmond. We have noted that the former was compelled to suspend publication and unite with the *Nashville Christian Advocate*. The *Richmond Christian Advocate* asserted that, if the Lincoln Government sought to subjugate the South, southerners would have the consciousness that they had not started the war. Therefore, the editor advised the people to defend themselves, even though they might be compelled to destroy northerners who were sent against them.³⁰

Most conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, undoubtedly supported the Southern cause. The fact that Kansas and Missouri conferences heartily approved the work of the *St. Louis Christian Advocate* and especially the attitude of that paper towards the war shows conclusively that they favored the South.³¹ Missouri and St. Louis conferences of the Church, South, were required to take the "Test Oath" because they were supposed to be assembling for the purpose of aiding the Confederacy.³² Early in the year 1862, Mississippi conference "most fully and heartily" declared their "loyalty to the Government of the Confederate States of America."³³ That southern conferences were generally loyal to their sectoin is also shown by the fact that Holston conference in eastern Tennessee suspended all of their number who were not opposed to the North.³⁴

With southern leaders and conferences loyal to the Richmond Government, it was only natural that ministers sup-

ported the Confederacy. Elliott declares repeatedly that they were opposed to the North and accuses them of being responsible for many questionable acts—which means that they would be considered by the South as faithful to their own homes and institutions.³⁵ Dr. Carnes, editor of the *Texas Christian Advocate*, became commander of a regiment made up mostly of Methodist preachers and laymen.³⁶ Of the two hundred southern Methodist preachers in Missouri, very few were untrue to the South. Elliott says that "many were in the rebel army, many were in the most notoriously rebel communities, some led guerrilla bands, and a valiant few went . . . to Canada."³⁷ One southern Methodist chaplain wrote the editor of the *Nashville Christian Advocate* as follows: "Serene Doctor: The Lord grant you good health, peace, plenty, and everlasting deliverance from Lucifer and Lincoln."³⁸

While loyal to the South, two addresses by the Rev. D. S. Doggett were on a very high plane. The first was delivered in the Fall of 1862 in Broad Street Methodist Church in Richmond, on the day of thanksgiving and prayer appointed by the Confederate President. The people rejoiced exceedingly over their military successes. The sermon was a very moderate statement of the southern position.³⁹ April 4, 1864, he preached another sermon on the occasion of the National Fast. The situation from the southern viewpoint was unfavorable, and the minister sought to revive the waning hopes of the people in the Confederacy. He declared that he was still hopeful of victory. He spoke of the heresies and divisions in northern churches, and declared that the destruction of the Lincoln Government was imminent. Considering the condition of the South and the passions which had been aroused, this may likewise be considered a very temperate utterance.⁴⁰

But disloyalty to the Confederacy was not entirely lacking. We have already noted that Holston conference in 1862 expelled all of their number who were favorable to the North, and that in 1864 most of them declared their loyalty to the Washington Government.⁴¹ The most obvious disloyalty to the Davis Government was found in Kentucky conference. In the first session of the conference after the commencement of the Civil War, the question of adherence

to either the South or the North was decided in favor of the latter. Only eighteen or twenty ministers in Kentucky supported the rebellion, while sixty-four preferred to remain in the Union. The conference further refused to elect any secessionist to the General Conference which was to have met in May, 1862, at New Orleans. Finally, they voted to observe the day of fasting and prayer appointed by President Lincoln.⁴² With the occupation of the state by Federal troops it was comparatively easy to maintain the position taken in 1861. The conference of 1864, while deciding to remain a part of the southern Methodist Church, was overwhelmingly in support of the Union.⁴³

In sections of the South where ministers were disloyal to the Richmond Government it is safe to conclude that the laity were also disaffected. Particularly in Missouri does there seem to have been wide-spread dissatisfaction with the southern Church because of its support of the Confederate Government. Members of that Church promised to secure subscriptions for the northern paper,⁴⁴ and protests were common against the *St. Louis Christian Advocate*.⁴⁵ Methodists at Louisiana, Missouri, protested vigorously against the secessionist *Advocate* because of its support of the rebellion.⁴⁶ Later, they joined the Methodist Episcopal Church because it was loyal to the Federal Government.⁴⁷ This withdrawal from the southern Church was encouraged by southern Methodists who were loyal to the Union, and by leaders of the northern Methodist Church who believed they were serving not only their country but also the cause of pure religion by such proselyting.⁴⁸

The record of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, is one upon which an apologist for the Confederacy can look with pride. It is true that there were many instances of disloyalty to the South along the border, but most Methodist ministers and people whole-heartedly supported the insurrectionary government. Generally speaking, in both Methodist churches, loyalty to the section increased the further the people were removed from the "bloody ground" which had been set aside by the self-interest, avarice, and greed of both denominations during the years beginning with 1844 and ending with 1865. Naturally, the number of adherents to either Church in this section varied with the success of opposing armies.⁴⁹

1. Elliot, South-Western Methodism, p. 228. Cf. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 22, col. 2; January 15, 1862.
 2. Elliot, South-Western Methodism, p. 229.
 3. Richmond Enquirer, Volume LVII.; November 30, 1860.
 4. Elliot, South-Western Methodism, p. 229.
 5. Ibid., p. 226.
 6. Ibid., p. 230.
 7. Ibid. pp. 281-2.
 8. See Smith, Life and Times of George F. Pierce, pp. 436-88; Smith, Life and Letters of Andrew, pp. 435 ff.; Redford, Life and Times of Bishop Kavanaugh, p. 411; Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 302, col. 3; September 18, 1861.
 9. Elliot, South-Western Methodism, p. 377.
 10. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXV.; September and October, 1861.
 11. Elliot, South-Western Methodism, pp. 280-81.
 12. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXV.; June 14, 1861. The conviction of the *New Orleans Christian Advocate* that the war was of a religious nature is further illustrated by the following passage quoted from that paper: "Southern people feel profoundly assured that they are fighting for the only rights, the only comfortable life, and the only true social and political status the negro can ever have. They feel that they are fighting for the only true Christian civilization they can ever enjoy, either in this or any other country. Slavery is rapidly coming to be regarded as a providential system of African civilization. It has long since come to be regarded as a 'power' in general civilization; now, the idea of the present and eternal welfare of the Africans is involved in its defence. Southern men defend slavery now upon the same principle and with the same spirit as they do their religion, their homes, their wives and children, their personal honor and independence." (Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 318, cols. 4-5; October 2, 1861).
 13. The Liberator, Volume XXXI., p. 93, col. 5; June 14, 1861.
 14. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 397.
 15. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 22, col. 2; January 15, 1862.
 16. Ibid., Volume IX., p. 219, col. 4; July 10, 1861.
 17. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 290-91.
 18. Ibid., pp. 303-4.
 19. Ibid., pp. 376-7. Said M'Anally: "What a scourge is upon it! (the country) What chastisements it is undergoing! Who that really loves it can reflect upon its present condition, without feelings of bitterest anguish! Distracted, disrupted, torn, and bleeding! Its material interests all marred—its social relations almost broken up—its educational and religious interests all languishing! And the prospect for the future more dark, if possible, than the aspects of the present! Think of the bitterness of feeling—the blood-thirstiness and cruelty which are being manifested—the hatred and vindictiveness of one part of the people toward the other! Who, twelve months ago, would have believed the people of this country could ever have been led to indulge the feelings they have recently manifested? How total, in many instances, has been the disregard to private rights, private interests, and property! Think of the destruction of homes—the waste of towns and villages, and the desolations of whole tracts of country that have occurred—the thousands of innocent women and children who have been rendered houseless and homeless—and the tens of thousands of sober, industrious men, made desperate by the sufferings and privations they have endured."
- To this the editor of The Methodist responded: "All this is sternly true, but what is the guilty cause? It is the Southern treason against a righteous and Constitutionally administered Government. All this woe comes from the men with whom the Advocate has been in tacit alliance. Why does it not turn its

doleful admonitions toward them? The article from which we quote has no allusion to the reprobate culprits who inflict this misery on the country. Such is the maneuver of this Western editor. Why does he not treat with the retreating foes of his country?"

20. Ibid., p. 388.
21. Ibid., p. 426.
22. Nashville Christian Advocate, Volume XXV., February 21, 1861.
23. Ibid., April 25, 1861.
24. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 465.
25. A copy, published in 1863, is in the Confederate Museum at Richmond, Virginia.
26. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 394-5.
27. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 180, col. 3; June 4, 1862. Cf. Ibid., p. 206, col. 3; June 25, 1862.
28. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 382.
29. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXXIII., p. 102, col. 3; June 25, 1862.
30. The Liberator, Volume XXXI., p. 93, col. 5; June 14, 1861.
31. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 337-8.
32. Leftwich, Martyrdom in Missouri, Volume II., pp. 64-71.
33. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 86, col. 4; March 12, 1862.
34. Ibid., p. 406, col. 4; December 17, 1862. In August, 1864, the ministers of Holston conference declared that one hundred twenty of their number were known to be loyal to the North and that forty more were supposed to be. (Nicolay and Hay—editors—Abraham Lincoln, A History, Volume VI., p. 333).
35. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 363, 382, 395, 414, 421.
36. Ibid., p. 395.
37. Ibid., p. 435.
38. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 269, col. 1; August 21, 1861.
39. Doggett, A Nation's Ebenezer (Pamphlet).
40. Doggett, The War and Its Close (Pamphlet).
41. It is significant that in 1868, the southern Holston conference appealed to the General Conference of the northern Church for a return of property carried over by these ministers in 1864. (Cf. Leftwich, Martyrdom in Missouri, Volume I., pp. 267-740.)
42. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 398, col. 3; December 11, 1861.
43. Stevenson, Journal, Volume I., pp. 216-19. Stevenson and seventeen other ministers withdrew from the southern Church.
44. Elliott, South-Western Methodism, p. 300.
45. Ibid., pp. 412-13.
46. Ibid., p. 336.
47. Ibid., pp. 432-3. As a reason for their action they said: ". . . when the rebellion culminated in open hostilities we had the mortification to see, not only in the seceding States, but in our own State, all the official powers and authorities of our Church, with a very few honorable exceptions, arrayed against the Government with all their influence and power. Many of the ministers not only refused to utter or to tolerate the utterance by others of the usual prayers for the authorities and officers of the Government, but, on the contrary, *openly and publicly* prayed for the success of traitors in arms against it; publicly urged, by speeches and otherwise, the young men of the country to commit the crime of treason against the Government; urged them to kill, burn and destroy—to 'wade to their knees in blood' to destroy that Government framed by Washington, Adams, Jefferson, Franklin, and their compeers . . . We are unwilling to be made to bow down and worship an institution as a divine inheritance which had its origin in a cruelty and barbarity without a parallel in the history of the world as the price of our Church relations and Christian privileges."
48. Leftwich, Martyrdom in Missouri, Volume I., pp. 201-2. See also,

Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1864, p. 24; and Elliott, South-Western Methodism, pp. 412, 414, 428.

49. One of the most interesting questions connected with any war is the destruction of universal conceptions of religion. Jehovah becomes nothing more than a tribal deity, who is expected to bless his own adherents and curse those who are considered "enemies."

CHAPTER XXVII

ANSWERED PRAYER

While northern Methodists proclaimed that the Civil War was being waged to preserve the Union, they also declared that the contest was God's chastisement visited upon the nation for permitting the evil of slavery to exist for almost a century after the Declaration of Independence had been issued.¹ Slavery was declared to be the underlying cause of the civil strife which had arrayed brother against brother, and father against son.² Every endeavor which had for its purpose the destruction of human bondage in Church and State had the active support of northern Methodists.

Writing of the abolition of slavery, George M. Weston said in 1857: "That it will not take place in our day and generation, is as indutiable as anything future can be."³ But scarcely had war begun until measures prejudicial to the slaveholding interests were proposed. Previous to May, 1861 northern generals had sedulously protected the vested rights of slaveholders. General Butler had even offered the use of his troops in Maryland to suppress a threatened servile insurrection.⁴ This position of non-interference with slavery except to enforce the law was supported by the editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, who declared in January, 1861, that "revolting as is the Fugitive Slave law to our feelings, it is the duty of the government to enforce it until the sovereign people shall repeal it."⁵ But when General Butler, who had been placed in command at Fortress Monroe in May, 1861, conceived the happy thought of calling slaves who had run away from Confederate masters "contraband," and the Government had given its approval, the same editor commended "Butler's lawyer-like position."⁶

During the summer of 1861 the *Northwestern Christian Advocate* set forth the advantages of freedom for slaves and the absolute necessity of doing something to destroy slavery. The resolution of Erie conference, expressing the hope that

slavery would soon be abolished and no longer control national affairs, was printed.⁷ Three New York publications were quoted to show that when slavery was destroyed, white men would go to the South, improved machinery would be introduced, the power of politicians would be minimized, and the two sections and the churches would be re-united.⁸ August 7, Eddy said that leaders at Washington might "as well commence on the word *liberation*. It will come harder to their vocal organs than the others, but they will be obliged to come to it. They may halve it, or syllable it, or letter it, any way that its bold, manly pronunciation can be learned easiest, but learned it must be."⁹

The editor of the *Northern Christian Advocate* was also insistent in his demands that slavery must be abolished. "Let the cause of disunion be removed and the *Union* is safe. Let that most prolific source of anarchy, misrule, robbery and treason be swept away, and there will be no farther anxiety for the perpetuity of an excellent government. If we must have a civil war, with all its evils—and they are many—let it be for a sufficient cause. Let the freedom and moral elevation of 4,000,000 of human beings now in a bondage of intolerable cruelty, be reckoned into the results of such a war. In a word, let us accept the issue the rebels themselves offer—SLAVERY OR NO SLAVERY. In such a conflict, God, who hears the cry of the oppressed, will be on our side, and the sympathy of every Christian nation on earth will be with us."¹⁰

When President Lincoln revoked the order of General Fremont, decreeing freedom to slaves of rebels in his district, his action immediately raised a storm of protest among northern radicals. In reply to O. H. Browning, September 22, 1861, the President said that the general's order was not justified. He pointed out that a commander might seize a pasture for military purposes but the land was not thereby taken from the owner. The same was true of slaves. A proclamation of this kind Lincoln labelled as "simply dictatorship." "It assumes that the general may do anything he pleases — confiscate the land and free the slaves of loyal people, as well as disloyal ones. And going the whole figure, I have no doubt, would be more popular with some thought-

less people than that which has been done! But I cannot assume this reckless position, nor allow others to assume it on my responsibility." If he should do so, it would mean that he as President would seize and exercise legislative functions of government.¹¹

The editor of *The Methodist*, a compromising paper which had been established in 1860 for the purpose of holding border Methodists in the northern Church, supported the President. It was noted that it was not the purpose of the Chief Executive or the generals to abolish slavery in sections where the people were loyal. "The president, his counsellors, and Congress have each and all steadily resisted the clamors of the zealots who have urged that emancipation be made the *direct object of the war*." He declared that the North was dealing only with rebellion against the Government, and that slavery would be dealt with in seceding states according to the exigencies of the case.¹²

But this writer stood alone. Detroit¹³ and Minnesota¹⁴ conferences cordially supported Fremont rather than the President. The editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate* wrote: "The General is right. *The administration may not sustain him, but the people will.*" The editor then gave his argument in favor of emancipating the slaves. He asserted that the people of the North were being taxed to suppress rebellion and that taxes had been cheerfully accepted. "At the same time we demur to the enforced collection of this revenue if it is to be used in maintaining the right of our foes to their property in human flesh. Let every bondsman with a rebel master, be made a freeman and bid to defend his freedom and newly-found self-ownership against all comers."¹⁵ And as chairman of the Rock River conference committee on the "State of the Nation," Dr. Eddy presented a resolution which declared that the question of slavery would "have to be met as the hardy 'Pathfinder' met it in his proclamation, which rang like the shout of an angel, 'their slaves, if they have any, are free MEN!'"¹⁶

When President Lincoln presented his plan to compensate any state for a part of the loss sustained through emancipating slaves, Thaddeus Stevens dubbed it "the most diluted milk and water-gruel proposition ever made to the American

nation.”¹⁷ Among Methodists there was a division of opinion. Southern Illinois conference favored the plan and especially the colonization of the negroes.¹⁸ New York East conference considered it perfectly fair that “the States . . . share in the expense necessary to be incurred in affecting that object.”¹⁹ Even New England conference “hailed with pleasure and heartily” endorsed “the late emancipation measure of the President.”²⁰

Eddy was less cordial. March 12, he said that plans for purchasing slaves of loyal people were being considered,²¹ but his statement two weeks later showed that he disapproved the President’s proposal. One of the chaplains of the Union army declared that the proposed emancipation scheme was the greatest blow ever struck at slavery, although he considered it only an enlargement of General Fremont’s proclamation. Lincoln’s measure he believed to be only a halting step in the right direction, and yet he was willing to say: “Abraham Lincoln! His name shall be as dear while living, his monument as high when dead, and his fame as enduring as our own Washington’s—the President who gave slavery the *first direct* blow with the strong arm of the nation.” Eddy commented: “The extract gives some fine specimens of ‘hyfalutin.’”²²

When Congress considered the measure declaring all slaves in the District of Columbia free,²³ the law met with the approval of Methodists. After Congress had acted but before the President had affixed his signature, there was considerable doubt as to whether he would sign it, and much speculation as to whether Congress could muster a two-thirds majority to pass it over his veto.²⁴

When their fears were found to be without foundation, the comment of conferences and papers was very favorable. Rock River conference rejoiced: “Slavery has been swept from the District of Columbia!”²⁵ Eddy was especially jubilant: striking headlines, the doxology, and the president’s proclamation of a day of thanksgiving and prayer, appeared in the columns of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate*. Lincoln’s statements against slavery were quoted, especially that in which he said that the nation could not continue half slave and half free, and the conclusion of the editor given—

"That the rebellion in the sugar and cotton states can be suppressed and slavery preserved, we seriously doubt."²⁶ Another writer declared that the act of Congress was "one of the greatest victories of the war." He said some would ask: "But what is the world going to do for cotton?" And he answered: "The world can better afford to do without cotton, than it can afford to have it under a system which sets at defiance the laws of God and humanity." He asserted that if the war continued more than that Summer, the destruction of slavery would become an absolute necessity, for "the country can not endure the financial burdens of this war for two years more, nor do we believe it can for one year more." Either slavery must go, or the Republic would be destroyed.²⁷

At least one Methodist paper was interested in the suppression of the African slave-trade. When Captain Gordon was captured and sentenced for slave-trading, the editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate* said: "Let us have no maudlin pity for his fate. He ought to die! The wretch who could steal 99 human beings is unfit to live . . . Let the stern penalty be executed, and with it will come the strangling of Northern participation in the slave-trade."²⁸ Six months later, when a treaty to suppress the African slave-trade had been accepted by Great Britain and the United States, Eddy was unstinted in his praise.²⁹

The proposal to confiscate slaves of rebels which were used against the North met with the general approval of northern Methodists.³⁰ Only Rock River conference objected that "mere confiscation" was not enough, "for that makes slaves our property and not theirs; and the United States must not be a great slaveholder."³¹ But the following Spring, when the measure was being warmly debated in Congress, Eddy, who was responsible for the resolutions of Rock River conference, declared: "The Congressional hesitancy in adopting some plain law of confiscation is amazing. Do those gentlemen believe that the expenses of this war should be borne by loyal men? Do they legislate upon that theory? If so, their constituents differ radically. They believe that those who dance should pay the piper, and demur to defraying all the expenses of this huge carnival of death, gotten up by slavery

propagandists." He contended that there was no "dignity so sublime gathering about the right of property in man, in black men," that slaves should not be appropriated under confiscation acts.³²

From the time that Union forces began to march into slave territory, radicals began to demand the abolition of slavery. Three Methodist papers were especially insistent that drastic action be taken. According to Eddy, the rights of slaveholders were protected only if they were loyal to the Federal Government. He said various arguments would be advanced against emancipation—that it had proved a failure in British Colonies and that white men had been reduced to bankruptcy. Further, it was asserted that freedmen would not work because they believed that "freedom" meant freedom from work. These arguments were dismissed by Eddy who commented: "These and kindred sayings are repeated oracularly by the *London Times*, the *Washington Star*, and sundry slavery-loving sheets much nearer Lake Michigan."³³

That this Chicago paper should have been radical is to have been expected, but the same is true of formerly conservative Methodist papers. October 16, 1861, the *Western Christian Advocate* carried an article by O. A. Brownson, a Catholic, in which he urged emancipation as a war measure.³⁴ In June, 1862, the editor published an article of his own on "The Emancipation Question" in which he complained of the slowness of the Administration to act on this important subject. He confessed that there were wide differences of opinion as to the kind of manumission—some asking for immediate, unconditional emancipation, while others favored manumission and deportation. The first was the more popular with extremists, while the latter was supported by many Congressmen and by the President. Kingsley said that the argument most frequently heard against emancipation was that negroes were not fitted for freedom. But he held that freedom did not imply the right to vote, else white women and children were slaves. The question of race equality was not involved in the discussion. He admitted, however, that this was the greatest stumbling block in the way of total emancipation. This explained the plan to colonize the negroes. "One may blush for such a puerile exhibition of

mingled meanness and malignity," said he, "but since it exists, it would be unwise to ignore it in the discussion of the practical relations of the slavery question, especially so long as it dictates the policy of the Chief Magistrate of the nation."³⁵

The third paper to urge immediate emancipation was the *Christian Advocate and Journal*. Early in the year 1862, the editor, under the heading "Emancipation of the Slaves," urged the move as a military necessity.³⁶ A more definite alliance with the most radical element was made in an editorial which urged emancipation for the following reasons: (1) The South would be compelled to recall troops in the field to suppress slave uprisings; (2) "it would diminish the number of slaves and consequently the supplies of the southern army"; (3) it would increase the number of laborers and soldiers in the northern army; (4) it would "remove the only cause of the war"; and (5) "it would prevent any foreign intervention in our affairs" for "England would not dare to fight us, or fight for our adversaries if *we* fought for emancipation and *the South* against."³⁷

Whether or not President Lincoln was influenced by popular clamor is impossible to determine. Certain it is that before July 13, 1862 he showed the greatest impatience with those who were over-zealous for negroes. When Secretary Chase and others became especially interested in having slaves used as soldiers, he said: "What is all this itching to get niggers into our lines."³⁸ And when Sumner urged that an appeal "be made to the slaves, and the rear-guard of the rebellion be changed into the advance guard of the Union," Lincoln answered that "he would at once, if he did not fear that half the army would lay down their arms and three other States would join the rebellion."³⁹

But, commencing July 13, he seriously considered issuing an emancipation proclamation.⁴⁰ On July 22, the President submitted to the Cabinet the first draft of his famous Emancipation Proclamation. Several suggestions were made by cabinet members but only one was acceptable—namely, that of Seward who urged that it should not be published until after a northern victory. Seward's thought, said Lincoln, was "that it would be considered our last *shriek* on the

retreat.”⁴¹ It was discussed at two successive cabinet meetings, and by the President and individual members of that group. After the battle of Antietam, the Cabinet was again convened, and the proclamation issued, September 22, 1862.⁴²

While President Lincoln waited for a victory, the agitation for emancipation continued. Upper Iowa conference resolved to at once “memorialize the President of the United States in reference to the immediate emancipation of every slave in the United States.”⁴³ Minnesota conference could not “refrain from expressing an ardent desire that this frightful source of so much evil may be crushed by military power as soon as such a measure shall be deemed practicable.”⁴⁴ West Wisconsin conference declared that such a document would “fill heaven with joy and hell with terror. It would make every loyal heart rejoice, and every rebel heart quake with fear.” The army would be greatly inspired, and the rebellion be given a death-blow. “It would send the name of Abraham Lincoln down to posterity by the side of that of George Washington, forever honored—the one for freeing his country from the oppression of Great Britain, and the other for freeing it from the infinitely greater curse of slavery.”⁴⁵ Fully approving all these sentiments, Eddy kept alive the agitation in favor of the radical move.⁴⁶

During the two months after the President first presented the Proclamation to the Cabinet, there were two events of special interest for our study. The first was the publication of Horace Greeley’s “The Prayer of Twenty Millions,” in which the President was rather roughly handled;⁴⁷ and the reply of the President to this attack.⁴⁸ The editor of the *Northwestern Christian Advocate* commented upon the correspondence between Greeley and Lincoln and concluded: “We admit the great duty of the President is to save the Union, and *we are sure* he cannot save it and slavery. HE CANNOT. Now let him go ahead and ‘SAVE THE UNION.’”⁴⁹

The second event of interest was the visit of the Committee of clergymen from Chicago to President Lincoln, just nine days before the proclamation was issued.⁵⁰ Dr. William Patton and Dr. John Dempster, first president of Garrett Biblical Institute, composed the committee, who represented the Christian men of Chicago.⁵¹ According to the unsym-

pathetic Chicago *Times*, they represented "the religious community of Chicago" who "believe that the country is now suffering under Divine judgments for the sin of oppression, and who favor the adoption of a memorial to the President of the United States, urging him to issue a decree of emancipation, as a sign of national repentance as well as a military necessity." The *Times* pointed out that Providence would presumably be against the South, since that section held more slaves than the north, but the success of the Confederates did not indicate that such was the fact.⁵¹

In his reply to the ministers, Lincoln said he had been considering the subject for months. He had received opposite opinions "from religious men who are equally certain that they represent the divine will." One side must be mistaken, and perhaps in some points both were in error. Said Lincoln: "I hope it will not be irreverent for me to say that if it is probable that God would reveal his will to others on a point so connected with my duty, it would be supposed he would reveal it directly to me; for unless I am more deceived in myself than I often am, it is my earnest desire to know the will of Providence in this matter. And if I can learn what it is I will do it. These are not, however, the days of miracles, and I suppose it will be granted that I am not to expect a direct revelation. I must study the plain physical facts of the case, ascertain what is possible, and learn what appears to be wise and right."⁵²

The President then presented some of the difficulties in the way of emancipation. After reciting incidents which had come to his attention to show that there was considerable difference of opinion as to the advisability of issuing such a document, he raised the question of the proclamation's utility. "What good would a proclamation of emancipation from me do, especially as we are now situated? I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet. Would my word free the slaves, when I cannot even enforce the Constitution in the rebel States? Is there a single court, or magistrate, or individual that would be influenced by it there?" He then spoke of the laws of Congress in regard to the slaves of rebels and declared that so far as he knew

no slave had been induced to come to the Union lines by acts of Congress. And if they should come, he asserted that the North could not care for the millions of negroes in the South. Concerning the effect of the proposed document upon the border states, Lincoln said: "I will mention another thing, though it meet only your scorn and contempt. There are fifty thousand bayonets in the Union armies from the border slave States. It would be a serious matter if, in consequence of a proclamation such as you desire, they should go over to the rebels." He admitted that the proclamation might help some in the North and some in Europe, "though not so much, I fear, as you and those you represent imagine."⁵²

This severe lecture could not have been very comforting to the committee. The *Chicago Times* gave the following account of the mission: "The Reverend Dr. Patton and company, who bore the memorial of the religious anti-slavery fanatics of this city to the president in favor of a decree of immediate and universal negro emancipation, seem not to have gleaned any very essential satisfaction in their interview. 'The President received the committee kindly, and informed them that the subject was one near his heart, but that he could not agree with the gentlemen that the time had come for such a measure'. And so the Reverend Dr. Patton and company came away. 'Great cry and little wool,' as somebody said when he sheared the hog."⁵³

President Lincoln's idea that the Emancipation Proclamation was a war measure received scant consideration from northern Methodists.⁵⁴ The *Western Christian Advocate* printed the proclamation with very favorable comment.⁵⁵ The editor of *Beauty of Holiness* commended Lincoln but urged that he should have freed all the slaves instead of excepting those in loyal states.⁵⁶ The *Christian Advocate and Journal* contained an article favorable to the President's action,⁵⁷ while *Zion's Herald* showed its approval by an article two and one-half columns in length.⁵⁸ Eddy was among the most enthusiastic supporters of the proclamation. In part he said: "The proclamation is not all we wish or look for, yet it is much, and perhaps may be enough *at present*."⁵⁹ But he declared that it had sounded the death

knell of slavery, "and pealed the herald note of our coming victory and triumph."⁶⁰ The chaplain whose statement in regard to Lincoln on a previous occasion had been termed "hyfalutin,"⁶¹ must have taken considerable satisfaction in Eddy's appraisal that "if this be followed up, as we believe it will, as age succeeds age, brightest among the names of our statesmen and deliverers, will shine that of ABRAHAM LINCOLN! THE GREAT EMANCIPATOR!"⁶²

The resolutions of Illinois and Genesee conferences concerning the Proclamation are typical of all those passed by northern conferences. The former endorsed it "as justified, not only by military necessity, but by the moral sense of the civilized world."⁶³ Genesee conference, by a unanimous vote,⁶⁴ heartily approved the Proclamation "as being a necessary war measure and directly calculated to bring about a sure and lasting peace, by removing the great cause of our past national disturbances and of the present Civil War."⁶⁵

Together with the emancipation of slaves, northern Methodists insisted that the National Government should employ negroes as soldiers. Eddy urged the policy within four months after the war started. He said Tennessee had ordered the conscription of all negroes between the ages of eighteen and fifty-five years, and his conclusion was that the North ought to arm them. He admitted that those favorable to the South would raise the cry of "servile war," but he considered such an attitude without justification since the South had set the example. He asserted that there were four million slaves held in the South and many negroes in Canada who desired to go south "under the folds of the star-spangled banner and to the sound of martial music." The question was whether or not these should be used. The South was compelling negroes to work for them. The North must therefore "offset that by proclamations of freedom and by the employment of African muscle, endurance and pluck."⁶⁶

But over sixteen months passed before President Lincoln announced his intention of using negroes in the Federal army.⁶⁷ So satisfactory was the service which these recruits rendered that Erie conference passed the following resolution in 1866: "That the negro soldier in many a well-fought

battle has vindicated his manhood against the slanders of those who have sought to degrade his character, as an excuse for reducing him to the condition of a brute. We trust that the day has dawned on his long night of bondage."⁶⁸

During 1864 and 1865 Congress passed⁶⁹ and three-fourths of the states ratified an amendment by which all slavery in the nation was forbidden.⁷⁰ From the time that an amendment to the Constitution seemed possible, northern Methodist leaders gave their whole-hearted support to the proposed measure. Maine conference, April 13, 1864, approved "of the efforts being made so to change the Constitution of the United States as to exclude slavery forever from all our borders."⁷¹ In 1865, New Jersey conference approved the amendment and condemned the New Jersey legislature for refusing to sanction the measure.⁷² *The Methodist*, an admittedly conservative paper, petitioned the Government for the universal emancipation of the slaves.⁷³ Other conferences and leaders added their approval to this radical departure from the position held by a majority of the people in 1861.⁷⁴

The destruction of slavery in the Nation had as a corollary the extirpation of slavery from the Methodist Church. That the war was distinctly the work of Providence was the opinion of many Methodist leaders. The course of the war was considered as conclusive proof that God had somehow led and guided the North and confounded the South.⁷⁵ By others the result was regarded "as an answer to the prayers of the church, which have been specially and increasingly earnest during the last forty years."⁷⁶ After Lincoln issued his Emancipation Proclamation, Ohio conference said: "Resolved, That we adore the Lord for at last virtually answering for us a question long and anxiously asked by the Methodist Episcopal Church, 'What shall be done for the extirpation of the evil of slavery among us?'"⁷⁷ And New Hampshire conference declared that God was "sublimely answering" the same question which had been "so long dubiously asked."⁷⁸

It is a curious fact that many ministers of the Methodist Episcopal Church continued to cling to the opinion that the Church had always been opposed to slavery. Wyoming

conference congratulated themselves and the Church that they had "been permitted for nearly a whole century in this country to witness against the great evil which has caused the present rebellion. With more or less steadiness of purpose and earnestness of effort we have sought its extirpation from the country."⁷⁹ Southern Illinois conference said that the Church had "ever held that slavery is a heinous sin against God and nature."⁸⁰ But Oneida conference was more truthful, declaring in 1861 that, "however humiliating it may be, candor compels the acknowledgement, that in the administration of the Discipline we have not been true to our principles. We have denounced the sin, but fellowshipped the sinner."⁸¹ It must be apparent that the Methodist Episcopal Church had not always "denounced the sin," but on the contrary had constantly protected slaveholding by members of the Church.

Although most northern conferences were opposed to slavery, there was no concerted action in favor of changing the General Rule on Slavery. Black River conference wanted non-slaveholding made a requisite for membership in the Church. Slaveholders then in the Church—and it was admitted that there were such—were to be permitted to withdraw from the same, but if they refused they were to be dealt with as in cases of immorality.⁸² New Hampshire conference delegates were instructed to see that the General Conference so changed the rule on slavery "that no prying eye of criticism or sympathy for 'the peculiar institution' " should find an excuse for slavery to remain in the membership of the Church or mistake their "entire and earnest condemnation of the great evil."⁸³ East Genesee conference, which had been very conservative during the war, was the only body that adopted a resolution embodying a specific and drastic change. They proposed that the rule on slavery should be revised so that it would forbid "Slaveholding: buying or selling slaves."⁸⁴

But since this proposal was not accepted by two-thirds of all the ministers of the Church, the question of changing the rule must be left to the General Conference of 1864 which met May 2, at Philadelphia. In all the General Conferences prior to 1864 the bishops had refused to recommend that

slavery be excluded from the Church. But in their address at the beginning of this Conference, they proposed that no more slaveholders should be permitted to join the Methodist Episcopal Church. Elliott declared that the concurrence of annual conferences was not necessary to make a change of the rule valid, because "the decision of the General Conference of 1784, requiring freedom in all cases, but which the civil power had suspended for eighty years, could now be carried out to the letter by the General Conference" without that approval.⁸⁵ The majority recommendation, forbidding "Slaveholding: buying or selling slaves," was adopted, 207 to 9.⁸⁶ It was considered advisable to secure the concurrence of annual conferences.⁸⁷

The reason for the action of the General Conference of 1864 needs some explanation. It was certain that it was only a matter of months until slavery would be abolished by constitutional amendment, and the General Conference legislation was therefore unnecessary. Ridgeway says that the Conference passed the measure because "the General Government needed all the moral force the Conference could give it in grappling with the Rebellion, whose inspiration was slavery."⁸⁷ But this could have been and was done by resolutions in support of the President and his war program.

Prickings of conscience because in previous years the Church had refused to exclude all slaveholders from the Church, and the assurance that their action would be popular throughout the Church and Nation are the more probable explanations. Bishop Haven, writing of this event, says that "when the war was over and not a slave remained in the country, the barren exploit of inserting the word 'slaveholding' in the Rules was performed. Had I been a member of that General Conference I should have opposed it. The word is as much out of place as 'cannibalism' or 'the offering of human sacrifices' would be. I wrote an article to that effect, but the tide was too strong for sober thought. For one, I regret that the Discipline is changed from that under which the Methodist Episcopal Church took its noble position, and fought so hard to maintain. If any change had been made it should have been, and might well be now, to strike out all allusion to slavery whatever. The battle is

fought and the victory won. Why maintain a useless breast-work and the ashes of burnt powder?"⁸⁸ But his protest was without avail, for "Slaveholding: the buying and selling of slaves" is still prohibited by the Methodist Episcopal Church.⁸⁹

To the mind of Methodism, the Civil War was God's answer to prayer. None of the proclamations of the President or acts of Congress had given Methodist leaders sufficient courage to abolish slavery in the Church, but the proposed Thirteenth Amendment affected all the people, North and South, loyal and disloyal. No appeal could be made by the southern Church to slaveholders; northern Methodists could not lose members by their proposed act. It was in this spirit that the General Conference enacted, and annual conferences approved what was already certain to be attained by the National Government. The Thirteenth Amendment was declared in affect on December 18, 1865.⁹⁰ The requisite number of northern conferences had ratified the General Conference action by the Spring of the same year so that it became the law of the Church, but appeals could be taken to the ensuing annual conferences if slaveholding members desired. For all practical purposes, therefore, both branches of Methodism became free from slavery at the same time.

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1. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1863, pp. 22-4; Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1862, pp. 12-13; Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1861, p. 15; *Ibid.*, 1862, pp. 28-9.
 2. Fradenburgh, *History of the Erie Conference*, Volume II., p. 527; Minutes of the Black River Conference, 1862, pp. 30-31, 34; Minutes of the Michigan Conference, 1861, pp. 33-6; Minutes of the Wyoming Conference, 1862, p. 33; Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1862, pp. 12-13; Minutes of the New England Conference, 1864, p. 24; Minutes of the Detroit Conference, 1861, p. 36; *Ibid.*, 1864, pp. 10-12; Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1863, pp. 21-22; Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1861, pp. 14-16; *Ibid.*, 1862, pp. 28-9; *Ibid.*, 1864, pp. 26-7; Minutes of the Providence Conference, 1862, pp. 21-2. Cf. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 324, col. 6; October 9, 1861; and *Ibid.*, p. 347, col. 3; October 30, 1861 and *Ibid.*, Volume X., p. 358, cols. 5-6; November 5, 1862. The Detroit conference of 1861 said: "That as slavery is the real cause, and liberty or slavery the real issue, of the contest, we are in favor of the humane, but vigorous, prosecution of the war until the irrepressible conflict between the two is finally settled in the utter overthrow of rebellion, in the utter destruction of treason with its twin monster secession, and in God's own good time, in the utter abolition of American slavery." The Minnesota conference committee declared that they were convinced "that slavery is the cause of all this war."

3. Weston, *Progress of Slavery in the United States*, p. 175.
4. Hosmer, *The Appeal to Arms*, pp. 52-3.
5. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 4, col. 2; January 2, 1861.
6. *Ibid.*, p. 188, cols. 2-3; June 12, 1861.
7. *Ibid.*, p. 249, col. 2; August 7, 1861.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 196, cols. 2-3; June 19, 1861. These papers were the *World*, the *Independent* and *Atlantic Magazine*.
9. *Ibid.*, p. 252, col. 3; August 7, 1861.
10. *Ibid.*, p. 268, col. 5; August 21, 1861.
11. Nicolay and Hay (editors), *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume II., pp. 78-81. Cf. Hosmer, *The Appeal to Arms*, p. 79.
12. *The Methodist*, Volume II., p. 276; September 7, 1861.
13. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 324, col. 6; October 9, 1861.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 347, col. 3; October 30, 1861.
15. *Ibid.*, p. 292, cols. 1-2; September 11, 1861.
16. *Minutes of the Rock River Conference*, 1861, p. 15.
17. Hosmer, *The Appeal to Arms*, pp. 205-7. Cf. Nicolay and Hay (editors), *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume II., pp. 129-130; and *The Methodist*, Volume III., p. 188, cols. 3-4; June 21, 1862.
18. *Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference*, 1862, pp. 34-5.
19. *Minutes of the New York East Conference*, 1862, pp. 21-2.
20. *Minutes of the New England Northern Conference*, 1862, pp. 21-2.
21. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 84, col. 1; March 12, 1862.
22. *Ibid.*, p. 100, col. 5; March 26, 1862.
23. For an account of Lincoln's favorable attitude, see Nicolay and Hay (editors), *Abraham Lincoln—A History*, Volume V., pp. 215-17.
24. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 140, col. 1; April 30, 1862.
25. *Minutes of the Rock River Conference*, 1862, p. 28.
26. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 132, cols. 1-2; April 23, 1862.
27. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XXIX., p. 148, cols. 1-2; May 7, 1862.
28. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume IX., p. 372, col. 5; November 20, 1861.
29. *Ibid.*, Volume X., p. 148, cols. 4-5; May 7, 1862.
30. *Ibid.*, Volume IX., p. 324, col. 6; October 9, 1861. Cf. *Ibid.*, Volume X., p. 84, col. 1; March 12, 1862; and Fradenburgh, *History of Erie Conference*, Volume II., p. 528.
31. *Minutes of the Rock River Conference*, 1861, p. 15.
32. *Northwestern Christian Advocate*, Volume X., p. 84, col. 3; March 12, 1862. The article was entitled "Confiscation."
33. *Ibid.*, col. 1. Probably one of the papers referred to was the *Chicago Times*, a Democratic paper.
34. *Western Christian Advocate*, Volume XXVIII., p. 330, cols. 4-5; October 16, 1861.
35. *Ibid.*, Volume XXIX., p. 225, cols. 1-3; July 16, 1862.
36. *Christian Advocate and Journal*, Volume XXXVII., p. 65, col. 6; February 27, 1862.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 268, cols. 2-3; April 21, 1862.
38. Hosmer, *The Appeal to Arms*, p. 208.
39. Bancroft, *Speeches etc. of Carl Schurz*, Volume I., p. 209. The letter was from Sumner to Schurz, July 5, 1862.
40. Welles, *Diary*, Volume I., pp. 70-71. The announcement was made on the way to the funeral of Secretary Stanton's child. The members of the party were amazed at his changed sentiments.
41. Nicolay and Hay (editors), *Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln*, Volume II., pp. 479-80. Cf. Crooks, *Life of Bishop Simpson*, p. 374.

42. Welles, Diary, Volume I., pp. 142-4.
43. Minutes of Upper Iowa Conference, 1862, p. 42. Passed September 10.
44. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 358, cols. 5-6; November 5, 1862. The resolution was passed before September 22.
45. Ibid., col. 5; November 5, 1862. Resolutions were passed September 8.
46. Ibid., p. 288, col. 2; September 10, 1862 and Ibid., p. 300, cols. 3-4; September 17, 1862.
47. New York Tribune, August 20, p. 4, cols. 2-4. This was an open letter to the President. He maintained that the people who elected him were sorely disappointed. The following charges and suggestions or demands were set forth: (1) Lincoln was not executing the laws, especially the more important ones. (2) He was remiss in regard to emancipating slaves according to the provisions of the Confiscation Act. (3) He was unduly influenced by the representatives and menaces of the "fossil politicians" of the border states. (4) The Government was too timid in dealing with rebels. (5) The Union cause was suffering from the deference being shown to rebel slavery. If the President had served notice in his inaugural address that no loyal person could be held in slavery if a rebellion were begun, slavery would have been struck a staggering, if not a fatal blow. (6) The Confiscation Act was habitually disregarded by generals in the field. (7) Negroes were killed at New Orleans by northern troops when they came expecting freedom. (8) He declared that it was impossible to put down the rebellion and save slavery. (9) Finally, Greeley called upon the President to execute the laws, and especially the Confiscation Act.
48. Lincoln's reply to this attack was that his chief purpose was to save the Union and that whatever he did had that object in view. The question of slavery was subordinate to the larger purpose. If he could save the Union and free the slaves, he would do that; if he could save the Union by not freeing the slaves, he would do that; and if he could best serve the interests of the nation by freeing some slaves and not others, he would proceed to do so. He also promised that when he made mistakes and they were pointed out to him, he would endeavor to correct them (The source is the same as footnote 49, below).
49. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 276, cols. 4-5; August 27, 1862.
50. Welles, Diary, Volume I., p. 130; September 13, 1862.
51. Chicago Times, September 5, 1862, p. 2, col. 1. Cf. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 292, cols. 1-3; September 10, 1862.
52. Nicolay and Hay (editors), Complete Works of Abraham Lincoln, Volume II., pp. 234-6.
53. Chicago Times, September 18, 1862.
54. An exception is noted in Armstrong, The Old Baltimore Conference, p. 275.
55. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIX., p. 314, cols. 5-6; October 1, 1862.
56. Beauty of Holiness, Volume 13, No. 10, p. 326.
57. Christian Advocate and Journal, Volume XXXVII., p. 324, col. 1; October 9, 1862.
58. Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal, Volume XXXIII., '158, cols. 2-4; October 1, 1862.
59. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., 316, cols. 1-2; October 1, 1862.
60. Ibid., p. 324, col. 5; October 8, 1862.
61. Supra, p. 324.
62. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 316, cols. 1-2; October 1, 1862.
63. Minutes of the Illinois Conference, 1863, p. 26. Cf. Western Christian Advocate, Volume XXIX., p. 355, col. 1; November 5, 1862.
64. Conable, History of the Genesee Conference, p. 672.

65. Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1862, p. 13. For other conferences, see Minutes of the Ohio Conference, 1863, p. 16; Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1863, pp. 21-2; Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1862, pp. 28-9; Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1863, pp. 22-4; Minutes of the New York Conference, 1863, p. 32; Minutes of the New York East Conference, 1863, p. 32; Fradenburgh, *History of Erie Conference*, Volume II., pp. 530-31 (Meadville District). The Minutes of Michigan conference relative to slavery and emancipation are to be found in the Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume X., p. 339, cols. 3-4; October 22, 1862 and the Wisconsin conference resolutions in *Ibid.*, p. 355, col. 5; November 5, 1862.
- In all these resolutions the idea of "military necessity" was minimized, while the moral results of the proclamation as well as the moral necessity of such a document were emphasized.
66. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 260, cols. 2-3; August 14, 1861.
67. In the final Proclamation of Emancipation, January 1, 1863.
68. Fradenburgh, *History of Erie Conference*, Volume II., p. 534. This sentiment was probably shared by most northern Methodists. Cf. Minutes of the Genesee Conference, 1865, p. 35; and Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1863, p. 26.
69. The project failed twice in the House of Representatives but after the election of 1864, when the amendment was advocated by the Union party, the necessary two-thirds vote was secured, January 31, 1865. By December 18, 1865, three fourths of the states had ratified the amendment to the Constitution.
70. Hosmer, *The Outcome of the Civil War*, pp. 124-7, 143, 150-52, 221-2.
71. Minutes of the Maine Conference, 1864, p. 24.
72. Minutes of the New Jersey Conference, 1865, p. 24.
73. *The Methodist*, Volume V., p. 108, cols. 4-5; April 9, 1864.
74. Minutes of the Illinois Conference, 1866, p. 24; Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1865, pp. 28-9; Minutes of the New England Conference, 1864, p. 24; *Zion's Herald and Wesleyan Journal*, Volume XXXVI., p. 90, col. 3; June 7, 1865.
75. Minutes of the New York East Conference, 1864, p. 40; Minutes of the Rock River Conference, 1865, pp. 28-9.
76. Minutes of the Minnesota Conference, 1865, p. 36.
77. Minutes of the Ohio Conference, 1863, p. 16.
78. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1865, p. 21. The resolution is as follows: "God is sublimely answering the question which was so long dubiously asked,—'What shall be done for the extirpation of slavery?' The slaveowners, grown insolent and bold by the concessions and compromises of the Church, he has allowed to plunge into a mad rebellion, which has involved them and their peculiar institution in an overthrow, entire and conspicuous as the fall of Pharaoh and his host. President Lincoln's emancipation proclamation was one stamp of almighty justice on the neck of oppression; the constitutional amendment of congress is another; and the fierce blows of our gallant army on rebellion have hewn its carcass to pieces. Now, let it be drawn forth without funeral, to rot in the last ditch, with the wreck of the Confederacy."
79. Minutes of the Wyoming Conference, 1862, p. 33.
80. Minutes of the Southern Illinois Conference, 1863, pp. 36-7.
81. Minutes of the Oneida Conference, 1861, p. 29.
82. Northwestern Christian Advocate, Volume IX., p. 155, col. 3; May 15, 1861.
83. Minutes of the New Hampshire Conference, 1864, p. 21.
84. Minutes of the East Genesee Conference, 1864, p. 7.
85. Elliott, *South-Western Methodism*, p. 411.
86. *Journal of General Conference*, 1864, p. 167. A conservative minority report was also presented (*Ibid.*, p. 377).
87. Ridgeway, *Life of Bishop Janes*, p. 275.

88. Haven, Autobiography (Stratton, editor), p. 126. The same thought was expressed in the General Conference of 1864 by John B. Wentworth of Genesee conference. He suggested that, owing to the proposed constitutional amendment, the General Rule "must soon become obsolete, and could have no practical effect, but only serve as a memorial of the former complicity of Church and State with this stupendous wrong, by which the civilization and Christianity of the nineteenth century in our country have become lastingly disgraced, without the use of extraordinary means for perpetuating their shame; therefore
- "Resolved 1.* That the Committee on Slavery be instructed carefully to consider the wisdom and propriety of recommending in their forthcoming report, not any amendment of our present Rule on Slavery, but an elimination of that Rule, by the action of this Conference and the concurrent action of a constitutional majority in the Annual Conferences." (Journal of General Conference, 1864, pp. 105-6).
89. Doctrines and Discipline of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1924, Paragraph 30.
90. Rhodes, History of the United States, Volume V., p. 540.

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important for the present study. T. A. Morris, L. L. Hamline, and Matthew Simpson—all of whom became bishops of the Church—and Charles Elliott, who did as much as any other man to create bitterness between the two Methodist Churches, were the editors during the period from 1834 to 1862.)

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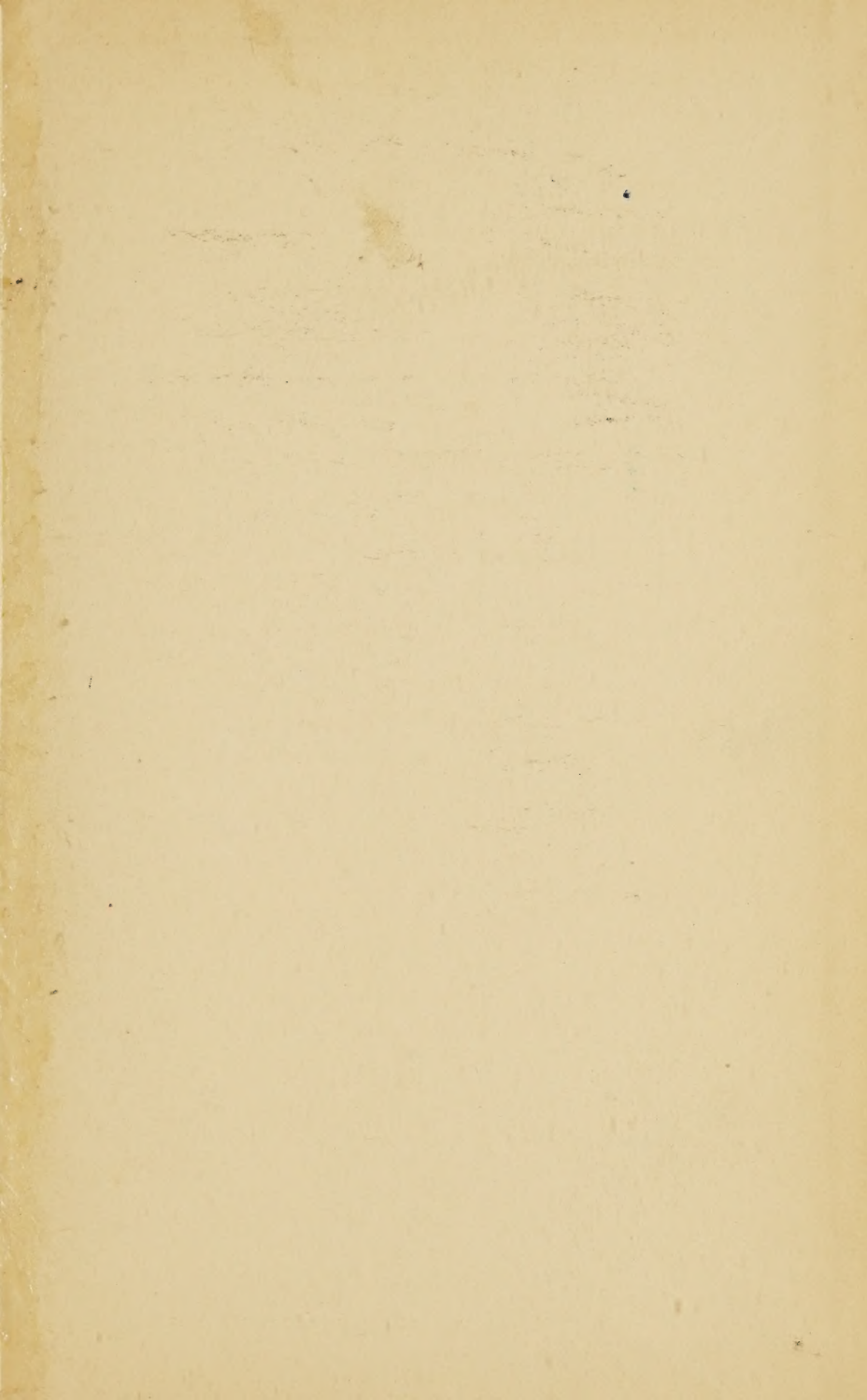
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